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# The English settlement of St Christopher, 1624 - 1629

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**THE ENGLISH SETTLEMENT OF ST CHRISTOPHER, 1624 - 1629**

by

**MARK EDWARD MILLARD**

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**RESEARCH MASTERS**

Arts and Humanities DTC

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### **Author's Declaration**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Research Masters has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at any other establishment.

A programme of advanced study was undertaken, which included MAHI500 Key Debates and Research Methods in History and MARE522 Research in the Arts and Humanities.

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## **Mark Edward Millard**

### **Abstract: The English settlement of St Christopher, 1624-1629**

This thesis provides a detailed study of the initial English settlement of St Christopher in the Leeward Island chain of the Lesser Antilles from 1624 - 1629. This activity has been largely overlooked in the historiography, where the focus in this period falls primarily on the English colonies of North America. A considerable weakness of imperial history lies in the lack of representation of the indigenous inhabitants of the West Indies during this time. By incorporating approaches from the Atlantic perspective and also pan-Caribbean historians, including the use of ethnographical evidence combined with English and French primary source data, a fuller picture of the settlement will be achieved with the native population playing a full role in the history of the island for the first time.

The main focus of the thesis is on this interaction between Thomas Warner's English settlers and the indigenous population of St Christopher. This study will show that through supplying provisions and cleared land the natives of the island made a considerable contribution to the survival and success of the first English permanent settlement in the West Indies. This represents an adaptation of the natives' culture of contact in order to access iron tools. The English strategy was calculated to ruthlessly exploit the initially amicable trade relations, seeking to take more native land by force when the colony was strong enough to do so. The causes of conflict between the two parties will be assessed from both a local and regional perspective, demonstrating the complexity of the interactions, and correcting the narrow focus of the imperial settlement narrative.

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## Map 1.1 - The Caribbean

Map 1.1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions

## Map 1.2 - The Lesser Antilles

Map 1.2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

## Introduction

att his returne [he] came by the Careeby Islands, where he became acquainted with severall Indian Kings...among the rest with one. King Tergreman...of St Christophers. He well viewing the Island thought it would be a very convenient place for the planting of tobaccoes<sup>1</sup>.

Thomas Warner's realisation in 1623 that tobacco would be a viable crop on St Christopher marked the start of English settlement on the island (See *figs* 1.1 and 1.2 for maps of the larger Caribbean area - St Christopher is shown as 'St Kitts'). Within five years of Warner agreeing a licence with Tegreman the native population had reportedly been wiped out.<sup>2</sup> This thesis will examine the interactions between Warner's men and the native population, and reveal how relations which began for mutual benefit deteriorated so quickly and with such devastating consequences for the Indians.

In doing so, this thesis demonstrates that Thomas Warner chose St Christopher precisely because it had a native population. Warner calculated the Indians would feed his nascent colony and provide them with a small amount of cleared land to plant tobacco in exchange for trade goods. Once established Warner hoped he would perhaps be able to enslave the native people, or at the very least drive them off their agricultural land, allowing the English settlement to quickly expand. In this way the native population played a significant role in the survival and expansion

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<sup>1</sup> London, British Library, Egerton MS 2395 fol. 503

<sup>2</sup> Capt. John Smith, *The True Travels and Adventures of Captain John Smith into Europe, Asia, Africa and America, From Anno Dom. 1593 to 1629* (London: Routledge, 1907), p. 139.

of the English settlement of St Christopher, a role that has never been recognised in the history of the period. From the native's perspective this thesis shows they were not simply waiting for history to happen to them; they exerted considerable agency in adapting their trading behaviour, cultural networks and kinship systems in response to the influx of Europeans into the Caribbean.

Although well known in outline, these events have remained on the periphery of the historiography of imperial, Atlantic and Caribbean history. As Zacek states, the islands have 'remained literally on the margins...with many scholars still uncertain about their precise location or about which individual islands made up the Leeward colony'.<sup>3</sup> This thesis, puts St Christopher front and centre as the story of the first permanent English settlement in the Caribbean, from which the Leeward Islands would be settled and the British West Indies created. By using a combination of historical sources and ethnographic information the crucial role played by the island's native population will become clear. To help understand why it is so important to include this perspective a consideration of how the Caribbean has been presented in the historiography over time is required.

## **Literary review**

The West Indies does not loom large in the broader historiography of the Stuart period, and St Christopher hardly features at all. The focus of study falls on the English Revolution, Cromwell's Republic, the Restoration, and the Glorious Revolution. It is within these events historians have sought to explain how Britain developed 'a distinctive polity, distinctive political and religious

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<sup>3</sup> Natalie A. Zacek, *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands, 1660-1776* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), p. 15.

mentalities, and a distinctive economic and social order that, when taken together, are best described as early modern'.<sup>4</sup> When this broader historiography has examined the Caribbean it has been from a socio-economic perspective relating to the metropole. Brenner has sought to 'explain the affiliations, initiatives, and alliances of the several socio-commercial groups that constituted the overseas trading community' and briefly mention the merchants involved in the settling of St Christopher.<sup>5</sup> However, his main focus lies in the 1640s and merchant connections to revolutionary activity. While this is useful context, the field of imperial history is where the most relevant study of St Christopher is to be found.

In the nineteenth century this period of nascent English settlement became known as the beginning of 'The Old Colonial System' and the first British Empire.<sup>6</sup> This mercantilist theory traced the roots of empire back to the Elizabethan explorers, and was continued into the twentieth century by scholars G. L. Beer and C. M. Andrews, among many.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently the notion of a weak state and the dramatic course of English politics in the latter half of the seventeenth century became favoured as more likely explanations for the origins and course of the first empire, rather than any mercantilist consensus.<sup>8</sup> The idea of a first British Empire, on the

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<sup>4</sup> Barry Coward (ed). *A Companion to Stuart Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. xiii-xiv, xxii.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution, Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. xi.

<sup>6</sup> Herman Merivale, *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies*, Vol. 1 (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1841), p. 187; Sir J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883), p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> George Louis Beer, *The Origins of the Colonial System, 1578-1660* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), pp. v-vi; Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History: The Settlements, Vol. I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), p. xiv, n411.

<sup>8</sup> Robert M. Bliss, *Revolution and Empire: English Politics and the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 5; D. C. Coleman, 'Mercantilism Revisited', *The Historical Journal*, 23, 4 (1980), p. 790.

other hand, has endured for over 150 years. As members of the US imperial School, Beer and Andrew's legacy has ensured that North America has dominated the historiography of the first empire, often at the West Indies expense.<sup>9</sup> This, combined with the later date for the beginnings of imperial activity has resulted in little work on the first settlement of St Christopher.<sup>10</sup>

Of those imperial works that have addressed the Caribbean region, A. P. Newton's is perhaps the best known and attempts to 'consider the history of the West Indies as a whole', arguing regardless of which power owned them, each island has 'been affected by the same broad movements'. The account of St Christopher's settlement is brief but gives some useful context in light of French and Spanish activity.<sup>11</sup> J. A. Williamson provides the most in depth account of settlement, although his main focus is on the metropolitan proprietary wrangling of merchants and courtiers regarding the conflicting patents of Barbados.<sup>12</sup>

More recently K. R. Andrews did much to illuminate the Empire's beginnings, including the Caribbean exploits of the Elizabethans and others up until 1630. Andrew's states the antecedent factors leading to the settlements of St Christopher's and Barbados have 'long remained obscure' in the historiography and believes the early colonies roots were in anti-Spanish opposition, and

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<sup>9</sup> P. J. Marshall, 'The First British Empire' in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V. Historiography*, ed. by Robin W. Winks (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> D. B. Quinn & A. N. Ryan, *England's Sea Empire, 1550-1642*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1983) p. 79; John C. Appleby, 'War Politics and Colonization, 1558-1625', *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol. I. The Origins of Empire*, ed. by N. Canny (Oxford: OUP, 1998), p. 55.

<sup>11</sup> A. P. Newton, *The European Nations in the West Indies, 1493-1688* (London: A and C Black Ltd, 1933), pp. x, 142-47, 155-163.

<sup>12</sup> J. A. Williamson, *The Caribbee Islands under the Proprietary Patents* (London: OUP, 1926), pp. 21-38.

could not have survived without Dutch sea power that by 1630 ‘supplied the wants of St Kitts and Barbados and disposed of much of their produce’.<sup>13</sup>

One thing all of the above works have in common is their scant regard for the role played by the indigenous population of St Christopher during the first years of English settlement.

Williamson’s account mentions almost nothing of Anglo-Indian relations until the start of conflict between the parties. Even then the primary source accounts are briefly presented without analysis before concluding the English, ‘having disposed of the Caribs...settled down to plant tobacco’.<sup>14</sup> Andrews treatment is even more brief stating the English and French joined together and ‘massacred the majority of the Caribs...in...a calculated campaign of genocide’, before moving swiftly on to describe the settlement of Barbados. For Andrews, the indigenous population played no role in the success of the colony.<sup>15</sup> This trend has continued in the imperial historiography with the natives of St Christopher not even mentioned regarding Warner’s settlement in the last major survey work of the British Empire.<sup>16</sup>

The development of Atlantic history, a perspective that has built significant momentum since the 1990s, and also the emergence of Caribbean history from the post-independence era, both offer better prospects for the inclusion of indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups. Atlantic

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<sup>13</sup> K. R. Andrews, *Trade Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 280, 301-2.

<sup>14</sup> Williamson, pp. 23-4.

<sup>15</sup> K. R. Andrews, *Trade Plunder and Settlement*, p. 301.

<sup>16</sup> Appleby ‘War Politics and Colonisation’, *OHBE: Vol. I.* ed. Canny, p. 71; Hilary McD. Beckles, ‘The ‘Hub of Empire’: The Caribbean and Britain in the Seventeenth Century’, in *OHBE Vol. I.* ed. by Canny, p. 219.



historians have challenged dominant imperial Eurocentric perspectives and argued that Native Americans and Africans exerted considerable agency into the eighteenth century. Whilst this perspective has also sought to recognise the importance of the Caribbean as ‘Britain’s most consequential presence in the Americas for most of the colonial period’, the focus on representing marginalised groups has largely been on North American Indians and West Africa.<sup>17</sup>

Where there has been study of the Caribbean, trade and slavery have remained the primary concerns. This is perhaps not surprising due to the slave trade’s ‘pan-Atlantic enormity’ and Atlantic history’s obvious interest in cross-Atlantic connections.<sup>18</sup> As a result in R. L. Paquette and S. L. Engerman’s work on the Lesser Antilles, over half of the volume is devoted to the slave trade and the transatlantic economy. There is however, effort made to give context regarding native Caribbean peoples, even if this does not extend to the settlement of St Christopher.<sup>19</sup> Trade is also the dominant factor in C. J. Koot’s comparative economic study of the Leeward Islands, Barbados, and New York for the latter half of the seventeenth century.<sup>20</sup> Sarah Barber’s work chooses broad themes in order to minimise ‘Eurocentrism’, and succeeds in representing native peoples, and other marginalised groups, while highlighting the difficulties of creating structural

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<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan, ‘Introduction: The Making and Unmaking of an Atlantic World’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic world 1450-1850*, ed. by Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. 1-17 (pp.1-3); Elizabeth Mancke, ‘Polity Formation and Atlantic Political Narratives’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic world 1450-1850*, ed. by Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: OUP, 2011), pp. 382-399.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Bailyn, ‘Introduction: Reflections of Some Major Themes’, in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structure and Intellectual Currents 1500-1830*, ed. by Bernard Bailyn and Patricia Denault (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009) pp. 1-43 (pp. 1-2).

<sup>19</sup> Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman, eds, *The Lesser Antilles on the Age of European Expansion* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), pp. 17-50, 147-345.

<sup>20</sup> Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621-1713* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), pp. 28-29.

sense from a ‘confusion of peoples, constantly redefining themselves’. In this way Barber seeks to present a less well-known Caribbean history whilst also contributing to the broader history of ‘American colonialism and British Empire’.<sup>21</sup> Barber’s identification of the exchange in cultural knowledge between indigenes and Europeans is an idea my thesis will take forward regarding St Christopher.

From the 1970s Caribbean historians have sought to escape from imperial history and forge a pan-Caribbean identity, as exemplified by Lewis and Knight. Both built on Sherlock’s work suggesting that the history of the people of the West Indies was ‘worth studying for its own sake and not merely as an appendix of their several European, African, or Asian homelands, or of the US’.<sup>22</sup> Lewis describes the Caribbean as having its own ‘distinctive and idiosyncratic characteristics’ and that ‘the unity of Caribbean history is more significant and more lasting than its diversity’.<sup>23</sup> For Knight, imperial history removes West Indian’s from their own narrative, describing the transformation of the region as a result of mainly metropolitan efforts.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the claims of Atlantic history to be more inclusive to marginalised groups, it is post-independence Caribbean historians that have done the most to restore the Carib’s of the Lesser Antilles to the historical narrative. Hilary Beckles has shown that the Carib resistance to

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<sup>21</sup> Sarah Barber, *The Disputatious Caribbean; The West Indies in the Seventeenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 5-6.

<sup>22</sup> J. H. Parry & Philip Sherlock, *A Short History of the West Indies* (London, Macmillan, 1956), pp. vii-viii.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon K. Lewis, *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. 2; Bridget Brereton, ‘Regional Histories’, in *General History of the Caribbean: Vol. VI Methodology and Historiography of the Caribbean*, ed. by B. W. Higman (London: UNESCO Publishing, 1999) pp.308-342 (p.319).

<sup>24</sup> Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: OUP, 1978), p. xv.

European colonialism enabled them to keep the Windward Islands out of the ‘slave plantation complex’ for around 200 years.<sup>25</sup> Lenox Honeychurch, in a study of Caribs on his homeland of Dominica, dispels the myth of a violent and warlike people. Instead the Carib culture of contact with other native peoples was adapted to encompass trade with Europeans which aided their cultural survival.<sup>26</sup> Anthropologist Neil Whitehead must also be credited with bringing the importance of Carib people’s contribution to the fore. Although much of his work focused on the South American mainland, such was his breadth of understanding on the subject he was able to cross-over into Atlantic history to provide a more general view with regard to the Caribbean as a whole. He also published a collection of primary source material regarding Carib interactions with Europeans which encouraged a more nuanced view of Carib involvement and brought these multi-lingual sources together in translation for the first time.<sup>27</sup>

This analysis of secondary source material demonstrates imperial history has not meaningfully engaged with the early settlement of St Christopher, despite it playing an important part in the peopling of the Leeward Islands, and the creation of the British West Indies. The indigenous population have been presented as bit players in the history of the Island, quickly disposed of by the English settlers. Atlantic history offers opportunities for a more inclusive approach, yet its

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<sup>25</sup> Hilary McD. Beckles, ‘Kalinago (Carib) Resistance to European Colonisation of the Caribbean’, *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No.2/3 (June - September 1992), pp. 1-14 (p. 13).

<sup>26</sup> Lenox Honeychurch, ‘Crossroads in the Caribbean: A Site of Encounter and Exchange on Dominica’, *World Archaeology*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Culture Contact and Colonialism (Feb., 1997), pp. 291-304 (pp. 291, 302-3).

<sup>27</sup> Neil L. Whitehead, *Lords of the Tiger Spirit, A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana, 1498-1820* (Dordrecht-Holland: Foris Publications, 1988); Neil L. Whitehead, ‘Native Americans and Europeans: Early Encounters in the Caribbean and along the Atlantic Coast’ in *The Oxford handbook Atlantic world 1450-1850*, ed by Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: OUP, 2011) pp. 55-70; P. Hulme and Neil L. Whitehead, eds, *Wild Majesty: Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day: An Anthology* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992).

focus on Atlantic connections inevitably privileges the study of trade and slavery, often leaving the preceding tobacco colonies out of scope. However, the ability to draw connections with the contemporary settlement of Virginia, an area also engaged in tobacco plantation and a site of contact between indigenes and English settlers, is useful in testing the commonality of English colonial experience, and will be utilised in this thesis.<sup>28</sup> The work of Caribbean historians offers the best way forward for including the natives of St Christopher in the history of the period. Just as Honeychurch uses Dominica as a focal point, this thesis will concentrate on St Christopher, aiming to present a full account of the first years of settlement from the perspectives of the English and native population.

## **Primary sources**

Perhaps one reason why the settlement of St Christopher has been neglected in the historiography is the relative lack of primary source material when compared to the sugar plantations of the later period. There are three main sources for the early settlement of the island, one manuscript and two printed works. The account of John Hilton, ‘storekeeper and chief gunner of Nevis’ is part of the Egerton MS 2395 collection at the British Library.<sup>29</sup> Hilton wrote his account in 1675, over fifty years after the arrival of the islands first settlers. There is no precise date for when Hilton arrived on the island, but he was not present for some of the events he describes on St Christopher. His brother Anthony Hilton was on St Christopher some time in

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<sup>28</sup> Canny and Morgan, ‘Introduction’, in *Handbook of the Atlantic World*, ed. by Canny and Morgan, pp. 9-10.

<sup>29</sup> Egerton MS 2395, f. 503

1626 - 1627. John Hilton may have travelled with his brother on his first visit, however, if he travelled with Anthony from England to settle Nevis in July 1628, then his information regarding most of the events covered by this thesis were not witnessed directly.<sup>30</sup> This is certainly reason for caution, although he clearly had contact with the original settlers, and for this reason his account can be seen as a kind of amalgamation of what became the accepted English version of the settlement.

The account of the settlement provided by Captain John Smith, former leader of the Virginia colony, and keen promoter of English colonialism, is the closest in date to the events it describes, having been printed in 1629. Smith credits the account to ‘Thomas Simons, Rowland Grasscock, Nicholas Burgh and others’, and it appears Smith had interviewed these men, and perhaps also had access to their journals. The precision of the dates in the account suggests the latter. Grasscock was part of the original group of men who settled in January 1624, and makes the account important as the only source deriving from witnesses present for the duration of the time period covered by this thesis.<sup>31</sup> However, Smith was of course a proponent of colonial expansion, and the source must be used carefully with this in mind.

Jean Baptiste Du Tertre, a Dominican priest, provides a valuable French counterpoint to the English sources, and is described by Goveia as ‘the most important single work of this new

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<sup>30</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fols 503b-504

<sup>31</sup> Smith, pp. 135, 143.

phase of historical writing'.<sup>32</sup> Du Tertre lived in the Antilles from 1640-1658 and his two printed works used in this thesis were published in 1654 and 1667-1671 but surprisingly have not been translated into English.<sup>33</sup> Whilst he did not witness the events of the first settlement of St Christopher he did speak to numerous Frenchmen who had, and methodically recorded their accounts. Du Tertre was a well-educated man and his account provides rich descriptions of the people and natural history of the Lesser Antilles. As a Catholic observer Du Tertre shows a strong dislike of Protestantism, and had been briefly imprisoned by the English in Plymouth *en route* from France to the Caribbean. Perhaps as a result of this and a sense of fellowship to his countrymen he is sometimes more harsh in his criticism of the English, than the French. His writing about the natives is unusual for the time, as he sees them as men in an unfortunate situation, rather than as inferior beings. Du Tertre was 'an honest and accurate writer' whose strict method and detachment makes his account invaluable for this study.<sup>34</sup>

While Du Tertre does provide information regarding the native population of the Caribbean, it is not enough for a detailed analysis of the events described by Hilton and Smith. Charles De Rochefort, a French Huguenot minister, contemporary, and rival of Du Tertre, provides further

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<sup>32</sup> Elsa V. Goveia, *Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1980), p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Baptiste Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe, de la Guadeloupe, de la Martinique et autres dans l'Amérique . Où l'on verra l'establissement des colonies françoises,... par le R. P. Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre*, (Paris: 1654); Jean Baptiste Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les François. T. 1 / ... par le R. P. Jean Baptiste Du Tertre* (Paris: 1667-1671)

<sup>34</sup> Goveia, pp. 19-22; Derek Hughes, ed., *Versions of Blackness: Key Texts on Slavery from the Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2007) p. 327.

information in his printed work available in translation.<sup>35</sup> While not of the calibre of Du Tertre's work, De Rochefort did have direct access to the manuscripts of Pere Raymond Breton, a Dominican priest present in the Caribbean from 1635-1654, where he lived with the Carib people of Guadeloupe and Dominica.<sup>36</sup> De Rochefort therefore provides a great deal of ethnographic information regarding the Carib, and is one of the first writers 'to study the life of the Caribs as part of a cultural system'.<sup>37</sup> This information, along with that of another Dominican, Jean Baptiste Labat, also printed in translation, will be used to provide cultural context and investigate the motives of the natives of St Christopher in their interactions with the English.<sup>38</sup>

This thesis also makes extensive use of printed primary material including the Calendar of State Papers, Acts of the Privy Council and Hakluyt Society volumes.

## **Methodology**

By using an Atlantic perspective this thesis places the events of St Christopher's settlement firmly in the context of the broader sphere of influence. Examining previous English experiences in the Caribbean and contemporary Virginia will inform the analysis of both regions with regard to English colonial efforts and the experiences of the indigenes. By utilising the ethnographic information provided by De Rochefort and Labat this thesis can supplement the traditional

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<sup>35</sup> Charles De Rochefort, *The History of the Caribby-Islands, Viz. BARBADOS, St Christophers, St Vincents, Martinico, Dominico, Barbouthos, Monserrat, Mevis, Antego, &c. in all XXVIII.* trans. by John Davies (London: Ding and Starkey, 1666)

<sup>36</sup> Hughes, p. 322.

<sup>37</sup> Goveia, pp. 25-6.

<sup>38</sup> Reverend Pere Raymond Breton, *Dictionnaire caraibe-francais, 1665* (KARTHALA et IRD, 1999).

historical sources, countering their Eurocentric focus. This approach will not only provide new insights into the actions and motivations of the Indians, but also allow a deeper understanding of English behaviour and strategy for settlement. Atlantic history is often criticised for being Eurocentric, and in extreme cases, imperial history in disguise.<sup>39</sup> In making the native population central to the settlement story of St Christopher my thesis will avoid this pitfall, and demonstrate the ability of Atlantic history to include marginalised groups.

### **Carib culture**

The archaeology of the Caribbean is complex, and the identification of the cultural make-up of the pre-Columbine era has not been helped by the Spanish conquest. The Carib cultural identity of the natives of St Christopher is important for the accurate use of ethnographic detail and requires a brief examination.

Although not directly encountered by Columbus on his first voyage, the indigenous people of the Lesser Antilles became the first truly historic people of the New World when he named them as Caribs.<sup>40</sup> Described in unflattering terms by their neighbours of the Greater Antilles, Columbus would write that they were ‘very ferocious, [and]...eat human flesh’.<sup>41</sup> His letter was published in Barcelona in 1493, and then throughout Europe in Latin translation, in nine editions by 1494,

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<sup>39</sup> Philip Morgan and Jack P. Green, ‘Introduction, The Present State of Atlantic History’, in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed by Jack P. Green and Philip Morgan (Oxford: OUP, 2009), pp. 3-34 (p. 6).

<sup>40</sup> Louis Allaire, ‘Visions of Cannibals: Distant Islands and Distant Lands in Taino World Image’, in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age Of European Expansion*, ed. by Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), pp. 33-49 (p. 33, 35-6).

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Columbus, cited by P. Hulme and Neil L. Whitehead, eds, *Wild Majesty: Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day: An Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) p. 15.



ensuring Columbus's construction of Carib identity became the dominant view among the educated European elite.<sup>42</sup>

The natives of Hispaniola were worked to death by the Spanish as slaves in the *encomienda* system with an original population of four hundred thousand reduced to less than three thousand by 1519.<sup>43</sup> As a result the Spanish would label all the people of the Lesser Antilles as Caribs, resistant of conversion and defiant in the face of Spanish colonialism. This politically expedient redefining of ethnic boundaries belies the fact there was a significant level of cultural diversity among Caribbeans at the time. Slave raiding threw the whole area into turmoil. St Lucia, Tobago and Barbados were depopulated in the Windwards, and only St Christopher and Nevis maintained a population in the Leewards.<sup>44</sup> The ethnic identity of the natives of St Christopher upon Warner's arrival is called into question by these events. In pre-Columbian times the Leeward Islands along with the Virgin Islands belonged to the Eastern Taino tradition, with the Carib occupying the Windward Islands. However, the Carib were heading as far north as Puerto Rico in 1511, raiding Spanish settlements.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Hulme and Whitehead, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> Frank Moya Pons, 'The Establishment of Primary Centres and Primary Plantations', in P. C. Emmer, ed., *General History of the Caribbean, Volume II: New Societies: The Caribbean in the Long Sixteenth Century* (London: UNESCO Publishing, 1999), pp. 62-78 (pp. 64-6).

<sup>44</sup> Carl Ortwin Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 194.

<sup>45</sup> W. F. Keegan, C. L. Hofman and R. R. Ramos 'Introduction' in W. F. Keegan, C. L. Hofman and R. R. Ramos, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Caribbean Archaeology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.1-18 (p.11); Luis N. Rivera-Pagan 'Freedom and Servitude: Indigenous Slavery and the Spanish Conquest of the Caribbean', in *The General History of the Caribbean, Volume I: Autochthonous Societies*, ed. by Jalil Sued-Badillo (London: UNESCO Publishing, 1999), pp.316-362 (p. 327).

The only detailed archaeological study of pre-historic St Christopher suggests a continual occupation by a Saladoid culture from around 400 BC up to contact with Europeans.<sup>46</sup> However, historical sources prove otherwise. Sir Francis Drake stopped on St Christopher in 1585 and found it uninhabited, and Captain Smith comments that the island was Carib, ‘and that but lately’.<sup>47</sup> It seems whatever previous group of indigenes had inhabited the island had left or been removed by the time of Drake’s visit, and the Caribs were able to fill this vacuum. They had a permanent presence on Guadeloupe in the sixteenth century, and the 175km sea voyage to St Christopher was easily achievable for such accomplished seafarers. The fact they were culturally Carib will be confirmed using ethnographic information throughout this study.

## **Chapter structure**

The first chapter will provide context for the motives of the English in choosing St Christopher as a viable settlement opportunity, and for the Indians in allowing settlement. A discussion of the importance of Indian agriculture and knowledge transfer will be the focus of the subsequent chapter. The third chapter will extend the theme of agriculture to consider tobacco production, particularly the importance of land cleared by Indians, and the significance of Warner’s first crop in putting the nascent settlement on a sure footing. The last two chapters will consider the broad theme of conflict between the two groups. Chapter four will consider the impact European conflict and privateering had on the settlement and provide a cross-examination of the sources.

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<sup>46</sup> R. C. Goodwin, *The prehistoric cultural ecology of St Kitts, West Indies. A Case Study in Island Archaeology* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1979) pp.306-7; Irving Rouse, *Migrations in Prehistory: Inferring Population Movement from Cultural Remains* (Ann Arbor: Yale University, 1986) p. 134.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Frear Keeler (ed) *Sir Francis Drakes West Indian Voyage 1585-86* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1981), pp. 66, 111; Smith, p. 139

The effect of the transition of the English from trade and plunder to agricultural settlement on the native population will be examined, showing violent dispossession to be an integral part of this evolution. Chapter five will consider why the Indians were moved to consider conflict while relations with the English were still reasonable. There will then be a consideration of the English motivations for conflict, and the impact of the 1622 Jamestown massacre on the mentality of colonial Englishmen. By way of conclusion a short epilogue will be provided followed by a summation of the arguments presented.

## **Chapter 1 - St Christopher - somewhere to be ‘quiet among themselves’<sup>48</sup>**

How then did Warner decide on St Christopher as a viable plantation site, and what motivated the Indians to allow the English settlement? This chapter will consider local and metropolitan factors that contributed to Warner’s choice of St Christopher and the conditions of the island prior to Warner’s arrival, particularly the presence of Frenchmen living with the natives at this time. The growing reputation of St Christopher as a refuge will be examined along with the effect of Indian trade with Europeans in the Lesser Antilles. Evidence regarding the Carib adaptation to their culture of contact to include limited integration with Europeans will be presented as central to their decision to allow English settlement.

Smith’s account states that sometime in 1622 Captain Thomas Warner, along with John Rhodes and Robert Bims, decided to leave the Amazon having had enough of the ‘disorders that did grow...for want of government amongst their countrymen’.<sup>49</sup> Warner had heard from fellow Amazon settler Captain Painton that St Christopher was a good settlement prospect. Hilton’s account provides further detail, stating that on leaving the Amazon, Warner followed the Lesser Antillean chain north:

where he became acquainted with severall Indian Kings Inhabiting these Islands, amongst the rest with one King Tegreman King of St Christophers.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Smith, p. 131.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, p. 131.

<sup>50</sup> Egerton MS 2395 fol. 503

This reference to several kings is notable as St Christopher was possibly the only inhabited island in the Leeward chain at this time. It therefore seems likely Warner also encountered Indians on some of the Windward Islands, most of which held Carib populations that had been forcibly resisting Spanish incursions for over 100 years.<sup>51</sup> Warner led a small group of fifteen men, a number insufficient to ward off a serious attack by the Spanish or a large number of Indian adversaries.<sup>52</sup> As such St Christopher represented a place not only far enough away from the Spanish-occupied Greater Antilles, but also from the Carib strongholds in the Windward Islands.<sup>53</sup>

St Christopher was also well placed geographically to avoid any censure in England for encroaching on Spanish territory. Although the Treaty of London in 1604 had not mentioned the Caribbean, with the Spanish unwilling to concede any part, James I's interpretation was that Englishmen might colonise those areas not occupied by the Spanish. Whilst this meant that the majority of English investors employed caution and looked to Virginia for returns, others, Captain Warner among them, identified Guiana as a viable settlement opportunity. However, the continued risks of existence in a sphere claimed by Spain ensured these ventures remained small, although profitable in the short-term. Warner's move to St Christopher can be seen as a continuation of the motives that had brought men to Guiana. Although James I's implicit approval offered some encouragement, operating within an area considered sovereign by the

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<sup>51</sup> Troy S. Floyd, *The Columbus Dynasty in the Caribbean, 1492-1596* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), pp. 134-5, 172.

<sup>52</sup> Smith, pp.131, 135.

<sup>53</sup> Hilary McD. Beckles, 'Kalinago (Carib) Resistance to European Colonisation of the Caribbean', *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No.2/3 (June - September 1992), p. 3.

Spanish introduced a considerable risk to those early colonists, and this risk must be considered as part of the English motivations for their actions whilst settling St Christopher in these early years.<sup>54</sup> So it was on St Christopher that Warner and his men found somewhere to be ‘quiet amongst themselves’, remaining for a year’s trial, perhaps raising an experimental crop of tobacco to defer some of their costs, and test its viability in this new environment.<sup>55</sup>

### Indian Kings

Both Hilton and Smith refer to St Christopher having an Indian ‘king’.<sup>56</sup> This was not the way Europeans typically referred to any of the Indian groups leaders in the Caribbean, and for this reason needs further examination. European colonists invariably compared Indian systems of governance to their own experience of absolute monarchy. In Virginia, Smith was able to recognise Powhatan’s divine ordination, receipt of tribute, and inherited position as a monarchical government.<sup>57</sup> In the Caribbean, however, such terminology was not employed. In Trinidad, Raleigh referred to the ‘*Casiqui* [from the Spanish ‘*cacique*’ meaning chief] which were Lords of the country’ who since contact with the English, French and Spanish, ‘call themselves

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<sup>54</sup> Joyce Lorimer, ed., *English and Irish Settlement on the River Amazon 1550-1646*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1989), p. 40; Joyce Lorimer, ‘The English contraband tobacco trade in Trinidad and Guiana, 1590-1617’, in *The Westward Enterprise: English activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650*, ed. by K. R. Andrews, N. P. Canny and P.E.H. Hair (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), pp. 124-150 (pp. 126-8).

<sup>55</sup> Smith, p. 131; Williamson, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503; Smith, p. 139.

<sup>57</sup> Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), pp. 45-6.

*Capitaynes*, because they perceive that the chiefest of every ship is called by that name'.<sup>58</sup> On St Lucia the crew of the *Olive Branch* dealt with two 'Captaines' from St Lucia and St Vincent; there is no mention of princes or kings.<sup>59</sup> The later evidence of De Rochefort in describing the Carib polity confirms this arrangement, there being several sorts of captain but that 'none of these Chiefs hath any command over the whole nation nor any superiority over the other Captains'.<sup>60</sup> This is confirmed by Pere Breton's Carib dictionary that has no word or equivalent for king.<sup>61</sup>

The indigenous population of St Christopher was relatively small, and it seems likely that the individual to whom both Hilton and Smith referred to as 'king' was in fact the head man or captain of a village. The significance of this use of the word 'king' becomes clearer as Hilton states that Warner returned with colonists to St Christopher in 1624 'with licence of King Tegreeman'.<sup>62</sup> Just like the Spanish before them, the English, being from a very hierarchical

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<sup>58</sup> Sir Robert H. Schomburgk, *The Discovery of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana with a Relation of the Great Golden City of Manoa (Which the Spaniards call El Dorado), ETC., Performed in the Year 1595, by Sir W. Raleigh, Knt., Captain of Her Majesty's Guard, Lord Warden of the Stanneries, and Her Highness's Lieutenant-General of the County of Cornwall, Reprinted From the Edition of 1596, with some Unpublished Documents Relative to that Country. Edited, With Copious Explanatory Notes and a Biographical Memoir by Sir Robert H. Schomburgk, PhD.*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1898), p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> John Nicholl, *An Houre Glasse of Indian Newes. Or A true and tragical discourse, shewing the most lamentable miseries, and distressed Calamities indured by 67 Englishmen, which were sent for a supply to the planting in Guiana in the year 1605. Who not finding saide place, were for want of victuall, left a shore in Saint Lucia, an Island of Caniballs, or Men-eaters in the West -Indyes, under the Conduct of Captain Sen-Ions, of all which said number; onely a 11. are supposed to be still living whereof 4. are lately returned into England. Written by John Nicholl, one of theaforesaid Company* (London: Nathaniel Butter, 1607), C.

<sup>60</sup> De Rochefort, pp. 313-4.

<sup>61</sup> Breton, *Dictionnaire caraibe-francais*

<sup>62</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

society, tended to project this on to indigenous peoples, resulting in an exaggeration of social rank and hierarchy.<sup>63</sup>

This does not, however, fully explain Smith and Hilton's misrepresentation of Tegurman as a king. By bestowing the supreme rank from European culture on this Indian captain, the legitimacy of the English settlement would be enhanced in the view of a European audience.

This is perhaps not surprising as Smith was writing at a time (1629) when the island was still claimed by Spain, as well as being shared with the French. Also, Hilton, looking back from 1675 was perhaps seeking to legitimise the colony of his youth. However, as the island had only recently (1667) been restored to the English from French possession at the time of Hilton's writing, he perhaps also wished to make this point afresh.

The reality was that the English settlers had at best an agreement with the head man of an Indian village for some cleared land on which to plant tobacco in exchange for iron goods. The latter part of this bargain was confirmed by Smith's account when in 1624 Captain Jefferson arrived in the *Hopewell* of London 'with some trade for the Indians'.<sup>64</sup> The former is suggested by Hilton's information that the English settled 'betwixt two rivers neare to the Kings house'.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Joseph Hall, 'Between Old World and New: Oconee Valley Residents and the Spanish Southeast, 1540-1621', in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. by Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) pp. 66-96 (p. 72).

<sup>64</sup> Smith, p. 136.

<sup>65</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503



## Anglo-French contact

On Warner's arrival at St Christopher Hilton informs us that there were shipwrecked Frenchmen living amongst the Indians who 'went naked, & did goe to warr with them'.<sup>66</sup> The 1647 testimonies of John Ackland and John Denny mention three shipwrecked Frenchmen, as does Smith's account.<sup>67</sup> Du Tertre gives a different view stating there were between twenty five and thirty Frenchmen that 'had taken refuge at different times and at different circumstances' and were growing 'excellent tobacco'.<sup>68</sup> Price claims that the numbers of French on the island at this time were much higher, with eighty or so of the total number being survivors from a failed expedition to Guiana. According to Price it was these Frenchmen who grew the first tobacco D'Esnambuc would take back to France.<sup>69</sup>

There is no conclusive evidence as to the true numbers of French already on the island, and the reality probably lies somewhere between the English and French accounts, with both perhaps seeking to enhance their claims to being the first to settle. The motivation for the English to play down the numbers of Frenchmen already on the island seems clear enough; the French probably came close to equalling or even exceeding the number of English settlers with Warner, placed at fifteen by Simons and nineteen by Ackland and Denny.<sup>70</sup> It is quite possible that the English

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<sup>66</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>67</sup> Rawlinson MS., "C." 94 (Bodleian) printed in V T Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667* (Hakluyt Society, London, 1924), p. 25; Smith, p. 135.

<sup>68</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, pp. 6-7; Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Mikael Parkvall, 'The role of St Kitts in a new scenario of French Creole genesis', in *From Contact to Creole and Beyond*, ed. by Philip Baker (London, University of Westminster Press, 1995), pp. 41-62 (p. 45).

<sup>70</sup> Smith, p.135; Rawlinson MS "C." 94 in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 25.

sources were referring only to the French that were settled with the Indians with whom Warner had agreed his license, whilst omitting any other Frenchmen in diverse locations on the island. It is conceivable that the French settlement locations agreed by the 1627 Anglo-French treaty, East and West of the English were in part influenced by prior French habitations.<sup>71</sup>

The English references to the French being victims of shipwreck and living naked with Indians seems to be a further attempt to emphasise that their presence did not constitute a planned settlement or enterprise, rather the adoption of savage habits by Europeans for whom survival was the only goal. However, the island was regularly passed by shipping from a number of nations; the future founder of the French colony on St Christopher, Pierre Belain D'Esnambuc, arriving in a badly damaged vessel in 1625, contemplated waiting 'for the convenience of another ship to go back to Europe' as opposed to the repair of his own ship.<sup>72</sup> If the French already on the island had wished to leave, it was possible for them to do so.

The French presence speaks of a relationship with the Indians for mutual benefit. It is likely the Indians would have gained iron goods and perhaps other items for their hospitality to the French, given prior relations between Europeans and the Carib and also the apparent terms of Warner's own 'license' from Tegreman. It seems then that the English and French had a similar agreement with the Indians at this time. However, in contrast with the English sources, Du Tertre does not mention any official agreement or license with the Indians, or any kind of Indian authority figure,

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<sup>71</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fols 9-10

<sup>72</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 5.

king or otherwise. He simply states that the French already on the island when Warner arrived were ‘living in peace with the savages’.<sup>73</sup> This is perhaps a more realistic portrayal of the living arrangements with the Indians, and gives further credence to Du Tertre’s evidence in general.

Small groups of Europeans such as these could not have operated at all on St Christopher without the consent and support of the indigenous population, and it is the motivations of the Indians in allowing this settlement that shall now be considered.

### **Indian motives for allowing settlement**

It is important to understand why the Indians of St Christopher allowed these first small groups of Europeans to settle to effectively represent the native perspective and also inform the discussion of how the Indians were moved to conflict in chapters four and five. To elucidate the Indian’s motives there must be a consideration of prior European/Indian relations, along with a careful consideration of the cultural context within which the Indians placed these visitors to their island.

Slave raiding by the Spanish can only have given the Indians of the Lesser Antilles a negative perception of Europeans in general. However, De Rochefort provides some insight into indigenous agency in these circumstances. After extensive slave raiding in the islands and some effective resistance by the native population resulting in Spanish losses of shipping and slaves, the Spanish realised they had ‘a stubborn enemy’ and that the islands would be better used ‘to take in refreshments of water, wood, and provisions’ and even ‘sometimes left their sick there to

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<sup>73</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 5.

be look'd after by the *Caribbians*'.<sup>74</sup> This agreement seems to have been negotiated with the return of Indian prisoners and gifts, on an island by island basis. The natives of Dominica and St Vincent, which had the largest Carib settlements, refused such terms. The use of Guadeloupe by the Spanish fleet in the way de Rochefort describes seems to give some credence to this evidence, and one can certainly see how a marginal population like that of St Christopher would see the arrangement as far superior to being continually raided for slaves.<sup>75</sup>

This policy towards cooperation with some Indian groups led to the island's reputation growing amongst other Europeans entering the arena as a safe place to water and repair ships, as demonstrated by Drake's stop on St Christopher in 1585.<sup>76</sup> A later English source (1675) provides further evidence of this reputation stating that one of the Frenchmen, Peter Cottey, whom Warner found on his arrival on St Christopher, was 'putt on shoare out of a Shipp for recovery of his health'.<sup>77</sup> It was this reputation of the island as a refuge that constituted Warner's fellow Amazon settler Captain Painton's 'information of this St Christopher', that influenced Warner to visit the island on his homeward journey.<sup>78</sup> From this enhanced reputation it seems likely that trade with the passing Europeans occurred, along similar lines, but in a smaller scale than on Dominica, as evidenced by the Frenchmen already present on Warner's arrival. To

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<sup>74</sup> De Rochefort, pp. 160, 324.

<sup>75</sup> 'The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt', in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 81.

<sup>76</sup> Keeler, pp. 66, 111.

<sup>77</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 508

<sup>78</sup> Smith, p. 140.

understand why the Indians were prepared to allow limited English settlement on St Christopher, it is necessary to consider the effect of previous European/Carib trade.

### **From trade to settlement**

The Indians of St Christopher allowed Warner to settle due to a desire for European trade goods.<sup>79</sup> It is important to understand the broader context of European trade items entering Indian trade networks, as this is at the heart of events surrounding Warner's early settlement.

From the late sixteenth into the early seventeenth century it was common for English visitors to the Caribbean to trade with native groups. From the Paria Gulf and Trinidad, St Vincent, Dominica and as far north as Florida, a common trading pattern had emerged.<sup>80</sup> The Indians provided fresh food and traded tobacco. In Paria, Dudley was happy to discover a 'great store of most excellent Cane-tobacco', and at Dominica, both on his 1585 and 1595 voyages Drake also reports the Indians possessed 'great store of tobacco', while tobacco also is mentioned as a trade item by Keymiss, Newport, Raleigh, Davies, and by George Percy as late as in 1607.<sup>81</sup> On Dominica, Drake states that procuring tobacco alone required his crew to 'barter knives,

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<sup>79</sup> Smith, p. 136.

<sup>80</sup> George F. Warner (ed), *The Voyage of Robert Dudley to the West Indies 1594-1595, narrated by Capt. Wyatt, by Himself, and by Abram Kendall, Master* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1899), pp. 22-3, 70; Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Vol X (Glasgow: MacLehose, 1904), pp. 206-7, 478, 110, 184, 228, 189.

<sup>81</sup> Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, Vol X, pp.207, 110, 228, 478, 184, 215, 383; George Percy, *Observations by Master George Percy, 1607: Observations gathered out of a discourse of the Plantation of the Southerne Colonie in Virginia by the English, 1606. Written by the Honourable Gentlemen, Master George Percy*, <http://www.virtualjamestown.org/VVD4SJBL.html>

hatchets, sawes and such yron tooles in trucke of Tabacco'. This George Percy also confirms stating 'we gave them Knives, hatchets for exchange, which they much esteem'.<sup>82</sup>

There is no explicit evidence that the Indians of St Christopher were trading tobacco with Europeans during this period, so the direct exchange of iron goods for tobacco must remain a question mark. However, this does not mean that they were unaffected by the trade that was certainly occurring around them. Joseph Hall has shown that Indian trade with the small Spanish settlement of San Augustine, Florida had effects well beyond its immediate sphere of contact, as far north as the Chesapeake and as far West as the Mississippi River.<sup>83</sup> The St Christopher natives were linked with those of the Windward Islands, of whom Hilton refers to as 'theire neighbouring Indians and friends', and the Windward islanders were certainly trading with Europeans.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, the St Christopher natives were also close to the Spanish colonised island of Puerto Rico, which had been raided by the St Christopher Indians neighbours, the Caribs of St Croix, as early as 1511.<sup>85</sup>

The most significant effect of this trading was that iron goods were fully incorporated into canoe manufacture in the Windward Islands by the Seventeenth century. This had broader significance for the region, where the canoe was the most important item of material culture throughout the Lesser Antilles. Prior to European contact a balanced cultural network existed between the

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<sup>82</sup> Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, Vol X, p. 228, 206, 189, 215; Percy, *Observations by Master George Percy*, Warner, pp. 22-3.

<sup>83</sup> Hall, 'Between the Old World and the New', in *The Atlantic World and Virginia*, ed. by Mancall, p. 71.

<sup>84</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>85</sup> Floyd, *The Columbus Dynasty*, p. 135; Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main*, p. 192.

islands, developed over time to ensure trade maintained social continuity.<sup>86</sup> Once the Indians in the Windward Islands had access to iron goods by trading their surplus tobacco with Europeans, this indigenous inter-island trade changed. It would have been possible for the natives of St Christopher to obtain iron tools through trade with their Indian neighbours, and perhaps the occasional passing European ship. However, the natives of the Windward Islands had a distinct advantage here, both geographically in being the first point at which Europeans entered the Caribbean, and in terms of trade by having a surplus crop of tobacco very much desired by the Europeans, and having larger islands on which to expand surplus production. For the natives of St Christopher, a small island with a small population, accepting a minimal amount of English and French settlement was the only practical way of ensuring access to the new iron technology.

With regard to the Carib of Dominica, Honeychurch argues that the trade between Indians and Europeans forces a reconsideration of the warlike Carib offering total resistance to any colonial advance. The strategy of the St Christopher natives in accepting a limited European presence on their island to gain European trade goods surely represents another adaptation which further erodes this stereotype. Post Columbian contact, the native people of the Caribbean were not simply waiting for history to happen to them, or capable of only a violent reaction to European strategies; they reconfigured their own adaptive strategies, exerting considerable agency in the process.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Lennox Honeychurch, 'Crossroads in the Caribbean: A Site of Encounter and Exchange on Dominica', *World Archaeology*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Culture Contact and Colonialism (Feb., 1997), pp.291-304, (pp. 297, 302).

<sup>87</sup> Honeychurch, 'Crossroads in the Caribbean', p. 291; Neil L. Whitehead 'The Crises and Transformations of Invaded Societies: The Caribbean (1492-1580)', in *Native Peoples of the Americas, Vol III: South America, Part 1*, ed. by F. Salomon & Stuart B. Schwartz (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) pp. 864-904, (p. 900); Beckles, 'Kalinago Resistance', p. 3.

However, this progression from trade to settlement also represents a fundamental shift in the balance of relations between the two parties. For the brief period the Windward Island natives were selling their surplus tobacco to the Europeans, they were in control of production for exchange.<sup>88</sup> The move to settlement meant that St Christopher became the first place in the Caribbean where relations started to shift in favour of the English. For the Indians of St Christopher, the short term gain of European trade goods would bring with it new challenges of cohabitation with the English and French. This would test their adaptive abilities to breaking point and it is these challenges that will be addressed in chapters four and five.

### **Carib culture of contact**

There had then been trade contact between Englishmen and Carib Indians for over fifty years when Warner and his men arrived on St Christopher. Settlement however, marked a new proposition for both parties, and to understand how the Indians of St Christopher viewed Warner and his men, understanding the cultural framework within which the Indians lived is essential. The primary sources give no motive for Indian action in allowing settlement, so this examination of cultural context will attempt to include Indian agency in the broader story of English settlement for the first time.

The Carib of the Lesser Antilles were located between the Taino cultures of the Greater Antilles

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<sup>88</sup> Honeychurch, 'Crossroads in the Caribbean', p. 297.



and the mainland tribes of the Orinoco delta in the south, and provided important trading and cultural links between the two.<sup>89</sup> The Carib captured women from neighbouring tribes in battle, and also took male prisoners, both of whom were incorporated into their kinship systems. In both of these regards it is evident that contact with outside groups was an important part of Carib culture in pre-Columbian times.<sup>90</sup> The question with regard to St Christopher is how did this culture of interaction affect and adapt to the arrival of the English on the island?

The men the Carib captured in battle were referred to as ‘poitos’, and taken to bolster communal activities like canoe building and agricultural land clearance, as well as for warfare, trade missions and fishing. Given the exclusively male demographic of Warner and his first settlers this practice bears further examination. The phrase ‘poitos’ has been translated to have a broad spectrum of meanings from a more or less equal brother-in-law or son-in-law, to a client, and at the opposite end of the spectrum, a slave. The status of the ‘poitos’ was based on the relationship between the Carib and the group from which the ‘poitos’ were captured.<sup>91</sup> It seems likely that the small groups of French and English who first settled St Christopher were placed within this cultural client context by the Indians, albeit with some adaptations from the pre-Columbian system, most notably the introduction of European trade goods.

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<sup>89</sup> Keegan, Hofman and Ramos ‘Introduction’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Caribbean Archaeology*, ed. by Keegan, Hofman and Ramos, pp. 1-18, (pp. 11-12); Honeychurch, ‘Crossroads in the Caribbean’, p. 294

<sup>90</sup> Whitehead, *Lords of the Tiger Spirit*, p. 16; Honeychurch, ‘Crossroads in the Caribbean’, p. 294.

<sup>91</sup> Honeychurch, ‘Crossroads in the Caribbean’, p. 294; Whitehead, *Lords of the Tiger Spirit*, pp. 181-2.

The Indian's perspective of Warner and his men would of course have been heavily influenced by the cultural norms with which they engaged others from outside of their polity. As the English and French were initially living with the Indians on good terms, it seems relations with the visitors transpired under the norms governing the more equal type of 'poitos' designation, with the visitors being assigned a status similar to brothers-in-law.<sup>92</sup>

It may well have been the case that the first few Frenchmen on the island, there due to misfortune, were incorporated into the Indian kinship system in a more traditional way and only as larger groups of French and English arrived was the 'poitos' concept adapted to include a more formal element of trading for iron goods. In this way another meaning could be given to Hilton describing Peter Cottey as 'living naked with the Indians' and 'going to war with them'.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps rather than meant to discredit French claims to an earlier organised settlement, Hilton is accurately describing Cottey's traditional 'poitos' status when the English arrive. As has been previously stated it is likely Cottey and others could have left the island on passing European shipping, and the fact Warner finds them there suggests they opted to stay and live as 'poitos' amongst the Indians.

This element of social integration further adds to the agency demonstrated via trade and is evidence of a rational response and adaptation to changing circumstances; a strategy for cultural survival.<sup>94</sup> As Labat stated later in the century regarding the Carib, 'they know how to look after

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<sup>92</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503; Smith, p. 135.

<sup>93</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>94</sup> Beckles 'Kalinago Resistance', p. 3; Honeychurch, 'Crossroads in the Caribbean' p. 301.

their own interests very well, and get what they want by methods that are by no means savage'.<sup>95</sup>

For Warner and his men St Christopher became an obvious choice for settlement due to the continued use of the island as a refuge from the late sixteenth century due to its distance from Spanish influence and Carib strongholds. However, the island also had another benefit; a small native population. The next two chapters will consider the advantage this gave the English in the provision of fresh food and also cleared land on which to begin the business of planting tobacco.

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<sup>95</sup> *The Memoirs of Pere Labat, 1693-1705*, trans. and abridged by John Eaden (London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1970), p. 98.

## **Chapter 2 - Indian agriculture and the transfer of local knowledge**

Having examined the various motivations of both the English and the Indians on St Christopher regarding the English settlement, this chapter will focus on the first few years of the English colonial experience. The main business for the English was to begin producing tobacco as quickly as possible, to recoup their initial outlays whilst simultaneously attracting future investors and colonists by proving the viability of tobacco plantation agriculture on the island.

Before any of this could be achieved the English had to survive long enough to see the fruition of their first few crops of tobacco, on which the entire success of the operation rested. The most immediate concerns were to establish a regular and reliable food supply, as well as constructing shelter and the various buildings required for processing and drying the tobacco crop. This chapter will show that the Indians of St Christopher played a significant role in providing for both these needs, and suggests as a result that the advantage of a small native population would not have been lost on Warner when deciding on St Christopher as the base for his new venture.

In Virginia the early colonists constantly struggled for food, and battled starvation.<sup>96</sup> In the Caribbean region historians portray a more bountiful land with an extended growing season.

Lorimer declares ‘there was no starving time on the lower Amazon’ whereas Barber notes that by

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<sup>96</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (London: Dent, 1980), pp. 17-18.

contrast with Virginia's intimate relationship with famine and malnutrition, in the Caribbean 'there was remarkably little complaint about food'.<sup>97</sup>

Looking in detail at the food situation for the early colonists of St Christopher suggests there were actually more similarities, at least after the first two years, with the hardships faced by their countrymen in North America than has hitherto been described. However, when the colonists first arrived on St Christopher in the January of 1624, the evidence suggests the picture painted by Lorimer and Barber to be broadly accurate.

Whereas Du Tertre tells us only that the Indians provided food for the initial French settlers, Smith provides more detail of Indian agriculture and the supply of provisions to the English. The settlers lived with the Indians for a month and then constructed a house and a fort whilst also planting fruits. During this time they 'lived upon cassado [cassava] bread, potatoes, plantains, pines [pineapples], turtles, guanes [iguanas], and fish in plenty; for drink we had nick-nobby'.<sup>98</sup>

Given that the English had arrived on 28th January 1624, spending a month with the Indians, it would have been February or March by the time they began planting provisions. The cassava, potatoes, plantains and pineapples would have taken many months to reach maturity, so the indigenous food Smith mention sustaining them during this period must have been provided by the Indians. As well as supplying these provisions the Indians were also processing some of this

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<sup>97</sup> Lorimer, p. 59; Barber, p. 124.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, pp. 135-6.

produce for the settlers. The cassava must be grated and washed to remove its deadly toxin before it can be made into bread. The ‘nick-nobby’ Smith refers to, an English term for potato wine, would have been either ‘maby’ or ‘ouicou’, both fermented alcoholic beverages made by the Indians from potatoes and cassava respectively.<sup>99</sup>

Whilst the English could have hunted the iguanas Smith mentions, or the fowl the Caribs hunted as game, this seems highly unlikely as they lacked the basic skills and knowledge to do so. They were not proficient in using the Indians’ dugout canoes and could not make them, severely restricting their ability to catch fish, manatees or turtles at sea. Hunting feral pigs and turtles on land then seem the only food gathering the English would have been capable of as witnessed by Colt on Barbados. It was a relatively simple matter to catch a beached turtle, come ashore to lay eggs. However, this only happened from September to October and cannot be considered a staple source of protein. It is more difficult to estimate the availability of feral pigs, knowing only that ‘Barbadoes hath moor wilde hoggs then St Christophers’, but it is unlikely they could provide more than an occasional source of protein, as they are not mentioned at all by Smith nor Hilton.<sup>100</sup>

In this initial settlement period the vast majority of the fresh food that the English received was off the backs of Indian labour, both agriculturally and from hunting, and provided in return for

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<sup>99</sup> De Rochefort, pp. 51, 300; Eaden, p. 98; David Watts, *The West Indies; Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987) p. 166.

<sup>100</sup> Philip P. Boucher, *France and the American Tropics to 1700: Tropics of Discontent?* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 122-3; Watts, p. 152; Harlow, p. 90.

iron trade goods. This arrangement seems to be an extension of that which Warner experienced on the Amazon where a source from 1623 states that:

The Christians take no pains nor labour for any thing; the Indians house them, work for them, and bring them victuals, receiving iron work or glass beads and such like "contemptible things" as reward.<sup>101</sup>

The extent and importance of the Indian contribution is further enhanced by a consideration of the state of English food supply after their relationship with the Indians deteriorated irreconcilably by 1626.<sup>102</sup> The events around this conflict will be covered in subsequent chapters. For now it is enough to realise that once the Indians had 'cutt them off', the English settlers found themselves in dire straits.<sup>103</sup> Smith described how the colony was now entirely dependent on provisions from Europe, although they were able to 'live off the spoil' of the Indians whom they had removed from their land. However, the Indian gardens were clearly not maintained, as, when a hurricane destroyed the English ship provisions they found themselves 'very miserable. Living only on what we could get in the wild woods'.<sup>104</sup>

Du Tertre confirms that both French and English 'found the island equally lacking in food', both experiencing famine at this time. Du Tertre further enhances this image of the colonists' inability to extract food from their environment with a dubious tale of newly arrived Frenchmen who

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<sup>101</sup> CSP Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 35-37.

<sup>102</sup> Smith, pp. 136-137.

<sup>103</sup> Egerton MS 2395 fol. 503

<sup>104</sup> Smith, p. 137.

were very sick from their crossing. Their countrymen already on the island were in no better condition and unable to offer help 'either spiritual or temporal' to thirty or so of the most sick who were left on the beach where they were eaten alive by land crabs. A priest arriving with D'Esnambuc in May 1627 'seeing so much misery & fearing to experience even more distress returned straight away to France'.<sup>105</sup> While almost certainly an exaggeration of the unfortunate circumstances of the French settlers, the general condition of both French and English certainly deteriorated in the period immediately after the cessation of food provision by the Indians. This demonstrates how important the Indian contribution was in allowing the first English settlers to establish a foothold on the island.

The situation of the English only improved in November of 1627 when two ships arrived with 'good store of all commodities to relieve the plantation'.<sup>106</sup> The dire situation of the English during this period is all the more remarkable considering that Indian agriculture on St Christopher prior to their arrival seems to have been well developed. In a 1658 grant of 1,000 acres of land on St Christopher to John Jeaffreson, it is explicitly stated that this was originally a 'parcel of certain gardens late belonging to the Indian Savages of the Island'.<sup>107</sup> The fact the English could not initially feed themselves using this land demonstrates perfectly their lack of knowledge regarding tropical subsistence crops.

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<sup>105</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, pp. 5, 8.

<sup>106</sup> Smith, p. 138.

<sup>107</sup> Samuel J. Hough and Penelope R. O. Hough (prepared by) *The Beinecke Lesser Antilles Collection at Hamilton College: A Catalogue of Books, Manuscripts, Prints, Maps and Drawings, 1521-1860* (University of Florida Press: Gainesville, 1994), p. 194.



This period of the settlement illustrates that the Caribbean was not necessarily the land of plenty portrayed by Lorimer and Barber above. A supply of fresh food to sustain a nascent colony was dependent on good relations with the local Indian population. Indeed, in the fledgling colony on Barbados, where there was no indigenous population, such was the need of the English that they imported 32 Indians from the South American mainland, bringing with them ‘plaintaines Potatoes Cassada [cassava] pines [pineapples]...to assist and instruct the english to advance the said plantacon’.<sup>108</sup>

This was very much a continuation of the practice in Virginia where the English had already demonstrated that they were unable to feed themselves on land that comfortably supported a large Indian population.<sup>109</sup> The Roanoke colonists of 1585 were not able to explore their surrounding area once the Indians withdrew further into the interior, being unable to ‘finde a graine of corn in any of their Townes’. As relations had deteriorated by 1586, Ralph Lane was concerned that if the Roanoke Island Indians withdrew leaving ‘ground in the Island vnsowed’ there would have been ‘no possibilitie...that we could have bene preserued from staruing out of hand’.<sup>110</sup> Members of the first Jamestown colony in 1606 under Captain Smith, also threatened with starvation, were billeted with the Indians to learn how ‘to gather and vse ther fruits’.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Rawlinson. MS, “C” 94 printed in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 30.

<sup>109</sup> Nancy Oestereich Lurie, ‘Indian Cultural Adjustment to European Civilization’ in *Seventeenth Century America: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. by James Moreton Smith, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), pp. 33-62, (p. 39).

<sup>110</sup> ‘17 August 1585 -18 June 1586. Ralph Lane’s discourse on the first colony’ printed in *The Roanoke Voyages 1584-1590*, Vol I, ed. by D B Quinn (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955) pp. 255-294, (pp. 266, 276).

<sup>111</sup> Captain John Smith, ‘*A Map of Virginia with Description of the Covntrey, the Commodities, People, Government and Religion* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1612) printed in *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter 1606-1609*, Vol II, ed. by Philip L. Barbour (London: Hakluyt Society, 1969), pp. 321-464 (p. 448).

Whereas in 1622 Thomas Weston's colony in Wessagusset Massachusetts were so short of food that they 'abased themselves...to get victualls from the Indians...fetching them wood and water...all for a meales meate'.<sup>112</sup> This clearly establishes the early English settlement of St Christopher's dependence on native food supplies conforms to the pattern of first settlement experiences by the English throughout the Atlantic World.

The knowledge of the West Indian natives as well as their agricultural produce extended beyond the Caribbean Islands into the extended Atlantic sphere. On Bermuda 'potatoes...plaintynes, Pynes [pineapples] and other delicate Indian fruits' along with the 'Casava roote' were considered 'a great blessing of God' and introduced from the West Indies from 1613 onwards.<sup>113</sup> From Bermuda and the West Indies some of this produce found a new home in Virginia. Captain Gabriel Archer, a Virginia colonist in 1607, noted that Pineapples, along with 'our west Indy plants of orenge & Cotton trees thrive well, likewise the potatoes pumpions [pumpkins] & mellions [melons]'.<sup>114</sup> The provision of food, agricultural knowledge and plants by the Indians of St Christopher to the English settlers, must also be seen as part of a broader framework in which native West Indian knowledge and flora became incorporated in most areas of English settlement in the New World.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Edward Winslow, *Good Newes from New England*, (London: 1624), p. 34.

<sup>113</sup> Wesley Frank Craven and Lewis Hughes, 'Lewis Hughes' "Plaine and Trve Relation of the Goodnes of God Towards the Sommer Ilands", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Jan., 1937), pp.56-89 (pp. 82-3).

<sup>114</sup> Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter*, pp. 100-102.

<sup>115</sup> Philip D. Morgan, 'Virginia's Other Prototype: the Caribbean' in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. by Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp.342-382 ( p. 361).

## Knowledge transfer

The provision of food was not the only thing the Indians had to offer the English. Their intimate knowledge and understanding of their environment was just as essential to the survival of the settlement. Hilton tells us that the English settled 'betwixt the two rivers neare to the Kings house, where he did live & began to build their houses, & alsoe a fort' and the fact that the English were situated in close proximity to the Indians is significant.<sup>116</sup> The colonists would have been able to directly reference the structure and building materials used by the natives in constructing their houses, and would have received a first hand education in such matters whilst living with the Indians for their first month on the island. This marks a new development for Englishmen in the Caribbean. Buccaneers that had previously frequented the islands would use their ships sails to make temporary shelters for their short stays on land.<sup>117</sup> Warner's men had no ship and were extremely limited in the supplies they could take with them on their Atlantic crossing. Subsequently they would need to construct their own shelters with the knowledge and perhaps assistance of the Indian population.

In an archaeological excavation of the Wingfield estate on St Christopher, Hicks demonstrated a direct physical link between these first timber structures, through mid-seventeenth century timber

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<sup>116</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>117</sup> Anne Perotin-Dumon, 'French, English and Dutch in the Lesser Antilles: from privateering to planting c.1550- c. 1650 in *General History of the Caribbean, Volume II: New Societies: The Caribbean in the long sixteenth century*, ed. by P. C. Emmer (London: UNESCO Publishing, 1999), pp. 114-158 (p. 121); also from further information provided by Anne Perotin-Dumon; Watts, p. 134.

structures more typical of the English Jacobean style, to stone buildings of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, all built on the same site, each one in turn replacing the predecessor's footprint.<sup>118</sup> This archaeological evidence provides a tangible thread showing how the later iterations of English plantation agriculture were quite literally built on these first timber structures. Inevitably it is the stone plantation houses that have been preserved, with no first settlements surviving. The effect has been to diminish the contribution of the seventeenth century in English colonial America and the Caribbean.<sup>119</sup> In recognising the contribution of these early settlements it is also important to acknowledge the contribution made by the transfer of local knowledge from the Indians to the English settlers. This knowledge, combined with the colonists' own skills, made it possible to construct these essential shelters quickly and cheaply from local materials, and of course, the provision of food stuff by the Indians meant the settlers could focus their efforts on constructing their colony, rather than dividing their time between construction, planting and gathering food. Contrast this with the experience of Sir Henry Colt, establishing a plantation on St Christopher in 1631 without Indian assistance who found 'the suddayne buylding of a house...one of the greatest labours and cares'.<sup>120</sup>

The evidence presented in this chapter has shown the significant contribution the Indians made in the first years of the English settlement of St Christopher, both in the provision of food by agriculture and hunting, and also in the transfer of knowledge regarding the local environment.

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<sup>118</sup> Dan Hicks, *The Garden of the World: an historical archaeology of Eastern Caribbean sugar landscapes*, Studies in Contemporary and Historical Archaeology volume 3 (British Archaeological Reports International Series, 1632, 2007), pp. 15-18.

<sup>119</sup> Barber, pp.28-9.

<sup>120</sup> Harlow, p.90.

This latter point will be considered further in the next chapter with an examination of the provision of cleared land by the Indians to the English, and the subsequent exploitation of this land for the production of tobacco. The former point regarding St Christopher fits neatly into Barber's general observation regarding the Atlantic region that the 'Indigenes could teach Britons...the ethics of value in the New World'. Indeed, long after the Indian presence had been removed from the Leeward Islands, the foodstuffs that had been provided to St Christopher's first English settlers would continue to be known as 'Indian provisions' explicitly denoting their indigenous origins.<sup>121</sup> By recognising the role played by the natives of St Christopher the settlement narrative transmutes into one of resource and exchange. Interactions between the Indians and English show both groups' intellectual resources being stimulated by new knowledge in an exchange between old and new worlds.<sup>122</sup>

This exchange shows that Warner chose St Christopher precisely because it had a small native population. St Christopher was probably the only island in the Leewards inhabited by Indians at the time. There were certainly other islands (Nevis, Antigua and Montserrat) settled by the English in the proceeding decades, that would have provided viable alternatives. Given the contribution of the Indians to the survival of Warner's colony in those first few years, the choice of St Christopher by Warner cannot be attributed to anything else but their presence. A further benefit of settling an already inhabited island was the ability to acquire cleared land for the

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<sup>121</sup> Barber, pp. 51, 126.

<sup>122</sup> Barber, pp. 50-1, 126

purpose of tobacco plantation agriculture. This topic will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

### **Chapter 3 - Tobacco planting on St Christopher**

To understand the early English settlement of St Christopher it is essential to fathom its relationship with tobacco, the commodity that was to form its paramount source of income and connection to the English Atlantic sphere. A brief examination of the context of tobacco as a crop for Native Americans, as well as a trade item to Europeans, and the creation of a European tobacco market is needed. How amenable St Christopher was to the planting of tobacco is also an important consideration, including the geography, environment and, crucially the availability of cleared land. This latter point is of fundamental importance in assessing the contribution made by the Indians of St Christopher to the success of Warner's venture on the island.

The amount of land required for Warner's first crop, and whether this could have been cleared, planted and harvested by the English, in such a short time, or whether they were able to use land already cleared by the Indians is the key question here. Historical and modern sources regarding tobacco production will aid this interrogation and establish the veracity of the primary source data in relation to both St Christopher and Virginia. The significance of Warner's first crop landed in London can then be assessed, examining its monetary worth, as well as its importance in attracting settlers, investors, and imperatively the attention of those with political power.

### **From the spiritual realm to the European market: Tobacco, a cross-cultural cultigen**

Tobacco was known by virtually every Amerindian society from Eastern Canada down to Southern Argentina, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, as far North-West as the Aleutian Islands. The leaf tobacco used by the Indians was far stronger than anything used today, and when taken in large enough quantities, either by smoking, ingesting, snuff or enema, could produce an hallucinogenic experience. Consequently tobacco was deeply connected with shamanistic practice providing a medium through which the spiritual realm could be reached. This was of use both in ritual and ceremonial formal social functions as well as healing, where a patient's ailments were seen as a physical manifestation of spiritual ill-health. In this way tobacco held a 'deep ideational and practical significance...in Amerindian belief systems'.<sup>123</sup>

Given this significance and the ample evidence regarding Caribs trading tobacco with Europeans for iron goods, it seems likely that the natives of St Christopher would have grown tobacco prior the arrival of European settlers. Whether it was for their own consumption or if there was a surplus to trade is uncertain, as is whether the very first Frenchmen Warner found growing tobacco on the island, were actually growing with the Indians, as various groups of English and Irish men had been doing on the Amazon.<sup>124</sup> What is certain is that the Indians would have had knowledge of tobacco as a crop, and also of its appeal to European visitors. This further demonstrates the impact of European entry into the Caribbean beyond the main trading islands in

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<sup>123</sup> Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: the Cultures of Dependence* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 24, 25, 30, 32.

<sup>124</sup> Lorimer, pp. 58-9.



the Windwards. Tobacco's place in native culture as a sacred plant was adapted to incorporate a realisation of its commercial value.

For the first English settlers on St Christopher tobacco had become the obvious cultivation choice for very different reasons. Probably introduced to England by Hawkins around 1565, Spain remained the main exporter into Europe during the early seventeenth century. Due to a limited supply, prices remained high with tobacco a preserve of the rich until the 1620's when English merchants encouraged overseas plantations to redress the balance of trade and make tobacco affordable to the masses. From here tobacco became 'a tool of the European political economy' via increased tax revenues and imports.<sup>125</sup>

The primary economic barrier to establishing a new colony was the high costs associated with transportation and labour. The more transitory endeavours in the New World of fishing and fur trapping had attracted financing due to the promise of quick returns. The business of establishing a colony required longer term investment. Tobacco however would prove to be a commodity uniquely capable of bridging this gap, providing a quick growing crop whose price could absorb high transportation and labour costs.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Karen Jillings, '“As Much Desired as it was Wondered at”'; Old World Encounters with New World Tobacco', in *Old Worlds, New Worlds, European Cultural Encounters, c.1000 - c. 1750*, ed. by L Bailey, L Diggelmann, K. M. Phillips (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2009), pp. 119-138 (pp. 127, 130); Matthew P. Romaniello, 'Through the Filter of Tobacco: The Limits of Global Trade in the Early Modern World', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 49: 4 (Oct, 2007), pp. 914-937 (pp. 916-7); Phil Withington, 'Intoxicants and Society in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 54: 3 (2011), pp. 631-657 (pp. 637-8).

<sup>126</sup> K. G. Davis, *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1974), pp. 144, 148-9; Robert Carlisle Batie, 'Why Sugar? Economic Cycles and the Changing of Staples on the English and French Antilles, 1624-1654', *Journal of Caribbean History*, Vol. VIII (1976), pp.1-41 (p. 4).

Whilst Virginia quickly became England's primary source of tobacco the earlier enterprises in Guiana and the lower Amazon region should be recognised as the point from which the thought of tobacco as a viable export commodity began to enter the consciousness of English and Irish settlers. Robert Harcourt, who settled on the Wiapoco river in 1609 stated that tobacco's price was 'great', its benefit to merchants 'infinite' and its ability to raise customs revenue for the Crown 'not a little'. The crop was 'planted, gathered, seasoned...in short time' and that 'onely this commoditie Tabacco [would] bring as great a benefite and profit to the undertakers, as ever the Spaniards gained by the best and richest Silver Myne in all their Indies'.<sup>127</sup> These South American settlements remained small and exported modest amounts of tobacco and other commodities, like annatto and dye woods, often in partnership with local Indian groups. Warner had previously been involved in North's Guiana enterprise, and his inspiration for tobacco cultivation came from this direct experience.

Tobacco production in Virginia would be a very different affair. John Rolfe is the first Englishman credited with growing tobacco in Virginia in 1611, exporting a crop to London in 1613. However the local tobacco, *Nicotiana rustica*, was not of the 'best kynde', being 'poore and weake and of a byting tast'.<sup>128</sup> Rolfe's solution was to import tobacco seeds from Trinidad and Caracas of the *Nicotiana tabacum* variety, and others soon followed suit. In 1617, Virginia shipped twenty thousand pounds of tobacco to England and in 1622 this had trebled to sixty

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<sup>127</sup> Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his pilgrimes; containing a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travells by Englishmen and others*, Volume XVI (Glasgow: MacLehose, 1906), pp. 385-6.

<sup>128</sup> William Strachey, *The Historie of Travel into Virginia Britannia; Expressing the Cosmographie and Commodities of the Country, Together with the Manners and Customs of the People* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1849), p. 122.

thousand pounds.<sup>129</sup> The importance of Caribbean Indian agriculture in providing Virginian and Bermudan settlers with new food crops was noted above, but this introduction of Caribbean tobacco to Virginia is arguable more important given the subsequent tobacco boom and significant increase in settlers heading to the New World. Rolfe's ensuing experiments in creating hybrid strains from the Caribbean plants further supports Barber's notion of a cultural exchange whereby European settlers, assimilating new flora, fauna, and knowledge, were able to use their ingenuity to create new opportunities, in this case by expanding existing markets.<sup>130</sup>

The settlement of St Christopher then can be seen as an amalgamation of both the previous experiences of Englishmen in Guiana and the Amazon, as well as Virginia. The former produced tobacco on a small scale in cooperation with local Indian tribes, the latter grew on a far larger scale using indentured labour that created a 'great migration wave' from which St Christopher could benefit as it expanded.<sup>131</sup> That the new system of operation on St Christopher should evolve in this way is hardly surprising given its connection to both places. When Warner made his voyage from England with his original group of settlers it was 'in a ship going for Virginia', which was also how he had returned from the Amazon sometime in 1622.<sup>132</sup> The shipping route meant Warner and his fellows would have travelled with Virginia planters, and seen first hand the business of tobacco plantation in the highly productive Virginia fields. Furthermore, the

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<sup>129</sup> Ralph Hamor, *A True Discourse of the Present State of Virginia*, (Virginia State Library, Richmond, 1957), p. 24; E. J. Salmon & J. Salmon, *Tobacco in Colonial Virginia*. (2013, January 29) in *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Retrieved from [http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Tobacco\\_in\\_Colonial\\_Virginia](http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Tobacco_in_Colonial_Virginia).

<sup>130</sup> Barber, p. 50.

<sup>131</sup> Batie, pp. 5-6.

<sup>132</sup> Smith, p. 131.

merchants of London like Ralph Merrifield and Maurice Thompson, who were financing Warner were 'linked to one another by a multiplicity of partnership and family ties' and only too aware of the profits to be had through tobacco production in Virginia.<sup>133</sup> If Warner had decided on tobacco as the way forward due to his Guiana experience, then this contact with Virginia planters and their investors would certainly have confirmed to him he was on the right path to prosperity.

### **Tobacco planting on St Christopher**

St Christopher's location on the Atlantic edge of the Caribbean tectonic plate has provided it with a geography and environment specific to its volcanic origins. These origins provided the parameters by which human settlement would develop, first for the natives, and then Warner and his men.<sup>134</sup> The landscape is dominated by three volcanic peaks rising steeply from the sea. The land above 450 metres has an approximate gradient of 50%, falling to 25% between 300 and 450 metres. From sea level to 300 metres there is a gradual rise of around 7%.<sup>135</sup>

For Warner and his settlers, the lowland area was the obvious choice for settlement and cultivation due its gradient being the most manageable. Sir Henry Colt commented on the lowland situation of settlements in 1631 that, 'all plantations must be by the sea by reasons of transportation from the sea and to the sea'. Attempting to settle even slightly into the uplands extrapolated the problems cause by the thick woodland, whose impenetrable nature made the

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<sup>133</sup> Brenner, p. 115.

<sup>134</sup> Watts, pp. 11-13.

<sup>135</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *St Kitts-Nevis Initial National Communication* (1994) <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/natc/kitnc1.pdf> pp. 1-2.

transport of men and provisions arduous in the extreme.<sup>136</sup> This necessity to settle on the coast had a further impact on narrowing the potential number of viable settlement sites. Below 300 metres most stream beds are dry due to the disappearance of the hard impermeable rock of the uplands below the friable volcanic soil of the lowlands. There are canyons, known locally as ‘guts’, which channel water in times of heavy seasonal rains, but it is only the perennial rivers that can guarantee continuity of water supply.<sup>137</sup>

It is no coincidence then that the Indians with whom Warner and his settlers lived initially, had chosen a situation ‘between two rivers’ as their home.<sup>138</sup> This was copied by both Warner and subsequent settlers like Colt, who informed his son that he had ‘chosen a scituation between two rivers, for water is to be prised above any thinge els’ and that ‘water must be kept and fought for’. Coppier captures this sentiment well referring to water and wood as ‘les Capitaines’, essential elements on the island.<sup>139</sup> A local Indian population meant that Warner was able to immediately see which location would be most suitable for human settlement and agriculture. However, there was a far more important contribution the Indians made to Warners settlement, and that was in the provision of cleared land.

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<sup>136</sup> Harlow, pp. 87, 90, 94.

<sup>137</sup> UNFCCC, *St Kitts-Nevis*, p. 3.

<sup>138</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>139</sup> ‘Voyage of Sir Henry Colt’ published in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, pp. 87, 90; Gerard M. Hunt, *Desperate in Saint Martin: Notes on Guillaume Coppier*, (USA: Trafford Publishing, 2012), p. 267.

**‘Yett was the place wonderfull discommodious’<sup>140</sup> - clearing land for agriculture**

Most settlers to the Caribbean at this time who were faced with virgin tropical forest were somewhat in awe of the spectacle, and soon found out how troublesome the business of clearing land could be. Guillaume Coppier, a French settler on St Christopher in 1628, commented that ‘the island is full of tall trees..that grow so extraordinarily big and tall that fifteen or sixteen men could not encircle them...you can barely see their summit’.<sup>141</sup> Colt, on St Christopher in 1631, found the process of clearing ‘one of the greatest labours and cares’, that the trees to be felled were ‘hard and tough’ and generally the ‘place [was] wonderfull discommodious’.<sup>142</sup> Further afield in Suriname the difficulty of clearing land meant that even a man as powerful as Sir Robert Harley was limited to a plantation of 40 acres, which would take four slaves a year to clear and plant.<sup>143</sup> In Barbados, an island with no native Indian population, Richard Ligon states that Courteen’s original planters of 1627 found the island ‘so overgrowne with Woods...so thick and most of the Trees so large and massie’ that the small number of settlers struggled mightily to clear even enough land to plant provision crops.<sup>144</sup>

Warner’s original party of settlers on St Christopher was also small in number (16 according to Smith). However, they had the advantage of settling an island with a native Indian population. Hilton tells us Warner and his men settled ‘betwixt the two rivers neare the Kings house, where

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<sup>140</sup> ‘Voyage of Sir Henry Colt’ published in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 90.

<sup>141</sup> Hunt, pp. 258-9.

<sup>142</sup> ‘Voyage of Sir Henry Colt’ published in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 90.

<sup>143</sup> Barber, p. 27.

<sup>144</sup> Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (London: 1657), pp. 23-24.

he did live & begin to build their houses'. He makes no mention of clearing land, however, as the English were situated near to the King's house, it seems reasonable to assume the land they traded from the Indians was part of the existing settlement, and therefore already cleared; it may well have been an existing Indian garden site. This would certainly help explain why Captain Warner found St Christopher, amongst all the Caribbean islands he would have seen on his first exploratory voyage, 'a very convenient place for the planting of tobaccos'.<sup>145</sup>

The planting of tobacco on already cleared land is further suggested by the timely manner in which the settlers were able to ready their crop. Smith informs us that 'by September we made a crop of tobacco; but on the 19th of September came a hurricane and blew it away'. Despite this setback, Warner was able to return to England in September 1625 with a second crop of '9500 lb. weight of tobacco' in the *Black Bess* of Flushing.<sup>146</sup>

Knowing how much plantation land would be required to produce this 9500 lb would help to assess whether or not this land was cleared, yet the calculation is far from straightforward. Figures regarding the production of tobacco vary greatly for the period, either due to climatic differences year on year, the work ethic of different groups of individuals, or planters simply seeking bragging rights within their community. The figures are further complicated by the fact that provision crops are also included in the output of individual planters. It is difficult to surmise a reliable estimate for the production of tobacco per acre and the amount of labour required for

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<sup>145</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>146</sup> Smith, p. 136; CSP Domestic, 1625-26, pp. 152, 166.

this production. Even when figures are provided that relate specifically to tobacco they must be carefully examined. On face value Virginia settler William Capps' estimation of 2,000 plants producing 500 lb of tobacco could help in a deduction for part of the equation, namely how many plants would be required to produce Warner's crop.<sup>147</sup> Capps' figure is from 1623, only a year prior to Warner's crop, so would have been achieved utilising similar methods and plants. By Capps' estimate, Warner's 9500 lb of tobacco would have required some 38,000 plants and, using figures from Virginia that estimate 4,000 plants per acre, would have required 9.5 acres of land.<sup>148</sup>

Another way to estimate the area of land required is to look at modern tobacco production figures, which are much more reliable, and adjust them for seventeenth century plant strains and growing methods.<sup>149</sup> By using a figure for the yield per plant it is possible to avoid discrepancies caused by modern planting methods which can achieve approximately 8,000 plants per acre. A modern organic crop, the nearest comparison to the methods employed in Warner's day, yields around 100 grams per plant. It is estimated that the plants used in the seventeenth century would yield around 25% less than modern strains due to the latter's improved disease resistance and increased size, so a figure of 75 grams per plant seems realistic for Warner's crop. Even using modern day plant yields one could only yield around 330 lb of tobacco per 2,000 plants; Capps is

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<sup>147</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, 'The First American Boom: Virginia 1618 - 1630' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol 28, No. 2 (April 1971), pp.169-198 (p. 178).

<sup>148</sup> Salmon & Salmon, *Tobacco in Colonial Virginia*

<sup>149</sup> Information provided by Jack Basharan of the Tobacco Seed Company, Southend on Sea, Essex <http://www.tobaccoseed.co.uk/index.html>



either wildly exaggerating, or, if given the benefit of the doubt, is actually referring to the bulk weight of freshly harvested wet tobacco, as opposed to the finished cured product.

Using a figure of 75 grams per plant Warner and his settlers would have required 57,453 plants on some 14.36 acres to produce 9500 lb of tobacco. Given the figures above from Sir Robert Harley's plantation in Surinam, where one slave could clear and plant ten acres in a year it is inconceivable such a small group of men as Warner's, who were not slaves and could not be coerced to the same levels of work, could have cleared all this land as well as build a fort and houses, *whilst* planting and maintaining a crop. They would have also needed to clear the additional land required for provisions, which would also have required regular maintenance work. It would have been March 1624 at the earliest when the settlers would have been able to sow tobacco seed, and it could conceivably have been later, as we do not know how long it took them to build their fort and houses and plant their provisions. Given that the crop destroyed by a hurricane was ready in September of the same year, just six months after planting seed, again points to cleared land being used.

This timescale for tobacco planting is further confirmed by the second crop, with which Warner returned to England in September 1625. Assuming that this second crop was seeded at the end of September 1624, immediately after the first crop had been destroyed by the hurricane, we can confirm through Smith that the settlers 'had another crop of tobacco' ready around the time Captain Jeffreson arrived on 18th March 1625 'with some trade for the Indians'.<sup>150</sup> Both of these

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<sup>150</sup> Smith, p. 136.

crops tie in with standard tobacco production figures which give a growing period of sixty to ninety days, and a curing period of six to eight weeks; so in total anywhere between 3.6 and 5.2 months, not including time for harvesting the crop.<sup>151</sup> Assuming Warners settlers seeded the second crop on 1st October, then 5.8 months had passed by the time of Captain Jeffreson's arrival.

The cleared land meant Warner was able to take full advantage of St Christopher's optimal growing conditions with a steady temperature, and daily rains due to the trade winds and central mountain ranges. The volcanic soil saturated with calcium and magnesium, possessed almost unlimited fertility when watered; it was no coincidence that the Carib name for St Christopher was Liamuiga, meaning 'fertile island'.<sup>152</sup> Being able to quickly return a saleable crop of tobacco was imperative, and the chain of events that unfolded from the landing of this first crop were vital in the survival and expansion of Warner's enterprise, and need to be carefully examined.

### **The importance of Warner's first crop**

In 1625, when Warner returned to London with his 9500 lb crop of tobacco, it would have been worth up to £1,425, at a maximum of 3s. per pound, depending on the quality of the leaf. Despite the difficulty of comparing the figures of production with Virginia, excluding the production of provisions, if one scales up the tobacco production achieved by Virginia planters Brewster and Spencer (with 4 and 6-7 men respectively) to provide a comparison with Warner's 15 men, the

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<sup>151</sup> Basharan, Tobacco Seed Company

<sup>152</sup> Goodwin, *The prehistoric cultural ecology of St Kitts*, pp. 22-23; Watt, p. 70.

figures would be 10,500 lb for Brewster and between 7,500 lb and 10,000 lb for Spencer.

Warner's figures recorded independently on landing at Southampton, give some veracity to the figures provided by the Virginia planters themselves. Furthermore, the amount Warner would have raised from his first crop gives credence to Morgans assessment that if the early tobacco planters could amass a reasonable number of servants, then they 'might indeed make a fortune'.<sup>153</sup>

However, the significance of Warner's first crop is not just in the contribution it made to his personal wealth, although this would have been a major motivating factor. The first crop clearly demonstrated to potential investors, settlers, and those in positions of power that tobacco production on St Christopher's represented a viable, profitable concern. This is evidenced by Warner returning to the island on 4th August 1626 'with near an hundred people' representing a six-fold increase in the scale of the plantation operation in the space of two and a half years.<sup>154</sup>

Not only was Warner returning with around 100 new settlers, but also with the backing of new investors, in addition to Ralph Merrifield, a merchant previously interested in Caribbean contraband trade, and primary investor in Warner's first crop on the island. Maurice Thompson became a partner with Thomas Combes, who already had a plantation on St Christopher. Thompson was a successful merchant trading in Virginia, to the extent that he was able to personally invest £4,000 capital in the St Christopher venture, and would go on to become 'the

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<sup>153</sup> E. S. Morgan, pp. 177-179.

<sup>154</sup> Smith, p. 136.

greatest colonial merchant of his day'.<sup>155</sup> The investment seems to have been a shrewd one, with Combes and Thompson returning 9,500 lb of tobacco in 1627, along with 10,000 lb for Merrifield and 10,500 lb by Roger Barwicke, servant to Warner.<sup>156</sup> Combes and Thompson were also able to arrange shipping and provisions. Warner returned to the island in 1626 with his new settlers in three ships provided by Thompson and Combes, and Combes himself had already sent three ships laden with supplies by 1627.<sup>157</sup>

The fact that Merrifield's, Combes' and Thompson's tobacco crops were all of a similar weight to that of Warner's original crop suggests that they were achieved on plantations of analogous size. Sources suggest that these new plantations were also on land previously cleared by Indians. Colt's plantation of 1631, a time by which the island was heavily populated with Englishmen, was built on land that had been previously 'a plantation of the Indians', and the 1658 grant of 1,000 acres to Jeffreson and Johnson states they were 'late being parcel of certain gardens late belonging to the Indian Savages of the Island'. The Indians were being forced from their agricultural land, which seems to have been significant in area, from 1626, and it would seem this land was quickly occupied by the like of Combes and Thompson.<sup>158</sup>

Although there were more servants available to the planters that could have been used to clear virgin tropical forest, it made far more economic sense to simply takeover abandoned Indian

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<sup>155</sup> Brenner, pp. 115, 125-7.

<sup>156</sup> CSP Colonial, 1574-1660, p. 83; APC, 1613-1680, pp. 121-2.

<sup>157</sup> CSP Colonial, 1574-1660, p. 85.

<sup>158</sup> Smith, p. 136.

plots. And despite the voracious way in which nature would quickly reclaim land left untended for even a few years, this was still far easier than clearing the virgin forest. Although Colt complains a great deal regarding the difficulty of clearing his land, his description of trees ‘that are butt smale’ is in stark contrast with Coppier’s description above. Colt’s mention of sugar cane, plantains and annatto plants on his land further confirms the suspicion that this land had not been long abandoned by the Indians, perhaps five years maximum working from Smith’s date of 1626 as when the Indians vacated their agricultural land.<sup>159</sup>

In contrast, on Barbados Ligon tells us the original settlers, having felled trees eighty to a hundred feet tall could not then muster the resources to dispose of them, choosing instead to plant between the boughs of the felled trees, ‘so far short was the ground then of being clear’d’. It is no wonder then in 1631 Colt found St Christopher’s ‘much greater and somewhatt cleerer then the Barbados’.<sup>160</sup> Ligon’s advice to others was to buy an existing plantation rather than cheap, uncleared land, and it would appear that the early settlers of St Christopher had a similar realisation, albeit without needing to pay. This was at the same time that Englishmen in Virginia were also taking over abandoned cleared Indian land, expanding their existing tobacco plantation even further, and demonstrating a commonality of English approach.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> ‘Voyage of Sir Henry Colt’ published in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 91.

<sup>160</sup> Ligon, pp. 24, 98; ‘Voyage of Sir Henry Colt’ published in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 91.

<sup>161</sup> Salmon & Salmon, *Tobacco in Colonial Virginia*

## **The Kings lieutenant: Warner's commission**

Warner's first crop also brought his enterprise to the attention of those wielding political power. Warner's actions in establishing a settlement on a non-English territory without Royal consent were unprecedented. Fortunately for him the Royal match with Spain, who still claimed the whole Caribbean, had been broken in 1623. Yet it was not possible for a middle class subject to gain direct access to the Crown under Stuart rule, unless represented by considerable wealth and even then there is no example of a proprietary grant awarded to anyone of less than a courtier's status.<sup>162</sup> Given Warner's experience with North's patent on the Amazon, he was obviously keen to avoid any such complications, realising legitimacy in the eyes of the Crown as essential for a viable settlement to operate and expand. Warner was awarded a Commission by Charles I in September 1625, giving Warner and the planters royal protection, and making Warner the royal Lieutenant of the Leeward Islands.<sup>163</sup>

There was however no award of title to the land they occupied, and the commission could have been withdrawn at any time. As Williamson comments, it appears this was a stop gap measure, to last only until a proprietary arrangement with a suitable courtier could be negotiated. These negotiations seem to have been underway from Warner's first return from St Christopher. They were initially with the Lord Treasurer, John Ley, Earl of Marlborough, who then released his interest to the Earl of Carlisle.<sup>164</sup> Carlisle was awarded the proprietary grant in 1627, placing

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<sup>162</sup> G. M. D. Howat, *Stuart and Cromwellian Foreign Policy* (London: A & C Black, 1974), pp. 32-3; Williamson, p. 27.

<sup>163</sup> CSP Colonial, 1574-1660, p. 75.

<sup>164</sup> Williamson, pp. 28-9.

Warner's settlement on more secure footing at home. Warner was made 'sole Governor for life, in consideration of him having taken possession of all the Caribbee Islands for the Crown of England, and having begun a plantation on St Christopher's'.<sup>165</sup>

## **Conclusion**

It is this latter phrase, 'having begun a plantation', that demonstrates how important it was for Warner's enterprise that he was able to quickly construct a viable plantation using land that had already been cleared by the Indians. The speed with which a crop was raised, the amount of land required for a 9500 lb. of tobacco, and the small number of Warner's original party, all suggest that the land had already been cleared by the Indians. This is further evidenced by later planters taking over land known to have previously been Indian gardens. This enabled the English to harness the island's natural fertility in a location already situated near the coast and perennial rivers, combining their experience in Guiana with new developments in Virginia, a place St Christopher was connected to via the shipping route and merchant investors of London.

The first crop was in line with what Virginia planters were producing per man and profitable, given the relatively high price of tobacco during 1625. This is further suggested by Warner being able to attract a significant number of new settlers and investors immediately upon his return to London. Furthermore, the crop gained the attention of members of the political class who could give the colony and Warner himself a sound legal footing on which to build. As the colony developed, cleared Indian land continued to benefit new planters and investors, allowing St

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<sup>165</sup> CSP Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 85-86, 101.

Christopher to expand from a tiny group of settlers raising a single crop of tobacco in 1624, to some 12,000 Englishmen by 1637, exporting 263,599 lb of tobacco to London. In Barbados, an island uninhabited by Indians and devoid of cleared land, having a white population of some 4,000 - 6,000 settlers in 1636, produced only 124,593 lb of tobacco in 1637, less than half of St Christopher's total.<sup>166</sup> All of this evidence demonstrates that the provision of cleared land by the Indians of St Christopher to Warner was a significant factor in the success of his first crop, which was the catalyst for the early settlements growth and prosperity. Furthermore, the cleared land continued to provide an important advantage to the English as the colony expanded as discussed in the following chapters.

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<sup>166</sup> Henry A. Gemery, 'Emigration from the British Isles to the New World, 1630-1700: Inferences from Colonial Populations', *Research in Economic History: An Annual Compilation of Research*, Vol. 5 (1980), pp.179-231 (pp. 219, 223); Watt, p. 158.



## Chapter 4 - Violence in the 'chaos zone'

Suerly the Devill the spiritt of discord haue great power in America, & loose he is aswell amongst Christians as Infidells; & wonder nott why the naturalls warr soe much the one with the other. Who is he that cann liue long in quitett in these parts? For all men are heer made subiect to the power of this Infernall Spiritt.

Sir Henry Colt's comment suggests conflict was a ubiquitous theme in the early English involvement in the New World.<sup>167</sup> This context is central to understanding the actions of Warner's settlers and the native population of St Christopher during the first years of settlement. From Hawkins' foray into slavery in the 1560s to Warner's settlement of St Christopher in 1624, the possibility of violent encounters with a host of different actors was never far away. The link between trade and violence in particular was perpetuated by warfare between Spain and Northern Europeans. The absence of standing navies meant the English and French, by granting commissions to privateers, legitimised the use of violence by their countrymen frequenting Caribbean waters.<sup>168</sup>

Although English activity moved beyond trade and plunder toward settlement for plantation agriculture, the transition was gradual with the first colonial phase representing an amalgam state. These hinterlands of English influence sparked the genesis of imperial incursion and the

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<sup>167</sup> 'The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt' printed in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p.73.

<sup>168</sup> Perotin-Dumon, p.117.

beginnings of the ‘chaos zone...the often dangerous situation of isolation, where the perils of incomprehension are played out in a tense standoff’.<sup>169</sup> The conflict that arose between the English and natives of St Christopher can be placed firmly within this arena.

As discussed in the introduction, St Christopher has attracted little attention in the historiography, and the conflict between the English and natives is examined only cursorily. Williamson mentions the Indians only as being ‘disposed of’ whereas Harlow speaks of a colony ‘slowly and painfully evolved in the face of the treachery of native tribes’.<sup>170</sup> The conflict fares no better in the work of later historians; Andrews paints the Indians as ‘warlike and violently hostile’, and Appleby, in Paquette’s work, perhaps the most detailed on the English activity in the Lesser Antilles, states only that King Tegreeman was ‘murdered in obscure circumstances’.<sup>171</sup>

Given St Christopher’s prominent role in the settlement of what would become the British West Indies, these events deserve far more scrutiny. Firstly this chapter will analyse the impact of European conflict and privateering on the Caribbean region prior to the settlement of St Christopher. This will demonstrate that Warner and D’Esnambuc were already engaged in high risk enterprises prior to their involvement on St Christopher, and this experience would shape their actions in the first years of settlement. A cross-examination of the four main accounts of

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<sup>169</sup> Kathleen Donegan, ‘What Happened in Roanoke: Ralph Lane’s Narrative Incursion’, *Early American Literature*, 48, 2 (University of North Carolina Press, 2013), pp.285-314 (p.291).

<sup>170</sup> Williamson, p. 23; Harlow, p. xv.

<sup>171</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, p. 300; John C Appleby, ‘English settlement in the Lesser Antilles during War and Peace, 1603 -1660’ in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. by Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), (pp.86-104) p. 90.

the conflict on St Christopher will then follow and is essential to provide a consensus view on the likely course of events due to the frequent disagreement between the sources. The effects felt by the native people of St Christopher due to the English transition from trade and plunder to agricultural settlement will then be assessed, and the evidence will show that violent dispossession was an integral part of this evolution.

The start of the Thirty Years War in 1618 marked a significant increase in corsair activity in the Leeward Islands. Huguenots from the Norman ports and La Rochelle were vexed at the French court's submissiveness to Spain, while puritans in England were angered at James I's execution of Sir Walter Raleigh. Both nations, although officially at peace with Spain, were thus encouraged to join the Dutch in Caribbean raiding.<sup>172</sup> From 1625 England was at war with Spain, and privateering commenced on a similar scale to that during the 1580s and 1590s.<sup>173</sup> Thomas Warner was directly involved in privateering both in European and Caribbean waters. The former is evidenced by Ralph Merrifield's petition to the Privy Council in May 1626 asking that Warner, holder of 'Letters of Marque', may have a vessel he had taken off the Downs, to add to his two other ships bound for St Christopher. As for Caribbean action, according to Major John Scott, Warner can be found in 1625 'with three ships from London Designed to attempt something vpon the Spanyards at Trinidada but it proued bootless, and after a short stay sayled thense to the Island St. Christophers'.<sup>174</sup> The date of 1625 is questionable, as Smith has Warner leaving St

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<sup>172</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, pp. 300-301; Boucher, p. 60.

<sup>173</sup> Appleby, 'English Settlement', in *The Lesser Antilles*, ed by Paquette and Engerman, p. 91.

<sup>174</sup> Sloane MS 3663, fol. 45b, printed in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 126.

Christopher in September 1625 for London, and return to St Christopher 4th August 1626.

However, the description of three ships does tally with official records for Warner's 1626 return to the Caribbean.<sup>175</sup>

Privateering's pervasive presence is further confirmed by the arrival of Pierre Belain

D'Esnambuc on St Christopher in 1625. D'Esnambuc was in a heavily armed brigantine 'with about 35 men, all good soldiers, well disciplined and well armed'. He had been attacked by a Spanish galleon off the Caymans, and with 'eight or ten of his men...dead, and most of the rest...seriously wounded' limped into St Christopher 'to repair his ship & for the surgeon...to dress the wounds of his injured men'.<sup>176</sup> This further confirms the reputation of St Christopher as a corsair refuge. Indeed the 1626 contract of association between D'Esnambuc and his partner d'Urbain de Roissey states they had both been active in the Caribbean for fifteen years previous.<sup>177</sup> This behaviour was set to continue as shown by 'M. de Cahusac' who reinforced the French on St Christopher in 1629 then 'allowed his captains to range free among the islands occupied by the Spanish'.<sup>178</sup>

Even by 1631, when England and Spain were again at peace there was an ever present threat of violence from the English Channel to any Caribbean destination. Sir Henry Colt, who left for

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<sup>175</sup> CSP Colonial, 1574-1660, p. 85.

<sup>176</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>177</sup> Boucher, p. 316.

<sup>178</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 12.

Barbados and St Christopher in this year states that the ‘first care’ of his captain ‘is the fitting of his ordinance appoyntinge to these particular men the charge therof... his next care is the defence of the Decks wth all other parts of the ship’ for which he had 60 musketeers. All of this to guard against ‘many men of warr of Holland & from other places...about the mouth of the English Channell’. The need for heavy arms is further evidenced when Colt’s ship is attacked by the Spanish off Dominica and pursued for several days.<sup>179</sup>

For those men like Warner, D’Esnambuc and Colt, setting out on high risk ventures, violence was to be expected, and certainly prepared for, with a violent death being a very real prospect. Du Tertre tells us D’Esnambuc ‘decided either to die or to follow in the footsteps of many brave men who had made their fortune in this now rich part of the world.’<sup>180</sup> Colt’s sentiments echo this ambition when he stated ‘For rest we will nott, vntell we have doone some thinges worthy of ourselues, or dye in the attempt thereof’. Death was an inevitable part of life and to chose death was sometimes preferable to living ‘in doubt and misery’, after all ‘a little congealed flegme will serve to choke vs as well as the whole ocean’.<sup>181</sup>

It is tempting to see hyperbole in the above statements, from Du Tertre perhaps to begin creating the legend of D’Esnambuc as the founding father of the French Antilles, and for Colt, writing home to his son, to present a paternal hero figure and assuage a sons anxiety for his father in the

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<sup>179</sup> ‘The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt’ printed in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, pp. 54, 78-81.

<sup>180</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 4.

<sup>181</sup> ‘The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt’ printed in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, pp. 84, 91, 96.

New World. However, D'Esnambuc's run-in with the Spanish, his privateering credentials, and later actions on St Christopher (examined below) show the possibility of violent death was never too far away. As for Sir Henry Colt, that possibility became certainty as he died 'abroad' in pursuit of those 'things worthy of ourselves' in 1635.<sup>182</sup> Warner himself had narrowly avoided Portuguese forces clearing northern European settlers out of the Amazon on behalf of the Spanish, and as demonstrated by D'Esnambic and Colt, any journey he made through Caribbean waters risked attack by the Spanish.<sup>183</sup>

So it was that Warner arrived on St Christopher to begin England's first permanent settlement in the Caribbean as a man used to taking risks, and prepared for and expecting violent encounters to arise. Whether a pirate in time of peace, or a privateer in time of war, the end mission was the same; to liberate others goods by threat or by force. It was within this environment of ubiquitous peril that Warner and his settlers would begin living with the natives of St Christopher, and it was not long before the expectation of violence was fulfilled.

### **Primary source analysis in the 'chaos zone'**

Both Smith and Hilton provide an account from the English perspective of the initial conflict between the settlers and the natives of St Christopher. Du Tertre covers the same events from the

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<sup>182</sup> Joseph Jackson Howard (ed) *The Visitation of Suffolke, made by William Hervey, Clarenceux King of Arms 1561 with additions from Family Documents, Original Wills, Jermyn, Davy, and other MS., &c.*, Vol. II (Lowestoft: Samuel Tymms, 1868), p. 34.

<sup>183</sup> Lorimer, pp. 70-71.

French viewpoint. None of the accounts align exactly; indeed some of the differences are stark. However, this confusion is consistent with other narratives from the 'contact zone', that interval between early contact and permanent settlement described by Mary Louise Pratt as 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple'. The accounts of conflict between Warner's settlers and the natives of St Christopher are not weakened by their lack of agreement. They accurately represent the 'miscomprehension, incomprehension [and]... absolute heterogeneity of meaning' incumbent on those living in this environment.<sup>184</sup> Donegan's extension of Pratt's 'contact zone' into the 'chaos zone' most accurately describes the situation on St Christopher in the early years of settlement. It was the addition of colonial incursion that would tip the balance from contact to chaos, resulting in increased levels of violence for all concerned.<sup>185</sup>

The 'chaos zone' is most evident in the accounts of Hilton and Smith when compared with Du Tertre. Both English authors had no previous experience of the Carib people or culture and can only interpret the natives' behaviour and motives in relation to their own culture. Du Tertre, however had lived among the Carib for a number of years and, though hardly complimentary, had garnered important knowledge regarding their way of life. This enabled him to interpret their actions in greater detail and with reference to the Caribs' own beliefs and societal structure. Using Du Tertre with the addition of ethnographic information from both Labat and De Rochefort, it is possible to assemble some order out of the 'chaos zone', giving new insight into the attitudes, concerns and motivation of the settlers and Indians alike.

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<sup>184</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession* (1991), pp. 33-40 (pp. 33, 37).

<sup>185</sup> Donegan, p. 291.

All four sources agree that relations with the Indians for both the first French settlers and Warner's original group of men were amicable. Hilton states that the English settled with 'licence of King Tegerman', and were allowed to settle 'neare to the Kings house'.<sup>186</sup> Smith describes some initial tension between the French and English, the former 'sought to oppose Captain Warner, and to set the Indians upon us', however these difficulties were quickly overcome and they all 'became friends'. This friendship with the Indians is further evidenced by the English living with them for the first month and receiving a good supply of fresh provisions from them, as discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>187</sup> Du Tertre paints a similar picture of French relations with the natives, stating the original settlers were 'living in peace with the savages' and eating the provisions 'that they generously supplied'. Du Tertre also confirms that 'the Englishmen lived on the same good terms with the savages'.<sup>188</sup>

This relationship seems similar to the one previously enjoyed by North's Amazon colonists, Warner among them. Of the Guiana natives Captain John Smith comments 'it is not known where Indians were ever so kind to any nation, not sparing any pains, danger or labour, to feed and maintain them'.<sup>189</sup> Whilst the natives of Guiana and St Christopher both shared a desire for iron goods from the English, the former had an additional motivation in welcoming North's men.

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<sup>186</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>187</sup> Smith, pp. 135-6.

<sup>188</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>189</sup> Smith, p. 133.



The local Tupi, Carib and Arawak tribes of the Amazon faced the significant threat of Portuguese expansion north along the Brazilian coast. The Indians had good reason to be fearful; after their rebellion in Para, Friar Manoel Gomes estimated the colonial Portuguese authorities killed more than 30,000 Indians.<sup>190</sup> The natives of St Christopher faced no such explicit threat from the Spanish and their motivation in maintaining friendly relations with the English would only exist as long as the benefit of iron trade goods outweighed any other negative aspect brought about by allowing English settlement.

The common narrative of the sources diverges regarding the deterioration of the relationship between the settlers and the native population. According to Hilton, Warner and his settlers left London bound for St Christopher in 1623; as no precise date is given for their arrival it seems reasonable that this ties in with Smith's arrival date of 23rd January 1624. Warner's party of 'divers gentln and others' settled with 'license of King Tegurman'. Hilton then very quickly moves to describe the beginnings of friction in the relationship between settlers and Indians. The settlers built houses, but 'alsoe a fort of pallesadoes with flanckers, & loopholes for their defence'. King Tegurman asked what 'their loopeholes and flanckers were for' and the settlers lie to him, saying they are merely to help contain the 'fowles' they keep 'about their houses'. The King is clearly suspicious of their motives, with Hilton commenting 'but how the King understood I knowe not, but within some time after the King was minded to cutt them off'; in other words stopping the supply of fresh food the Indians had been providing the settlers.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Lorimer, pp. 58-9; Mathias C. Kiemen, *The Indian Policy of Portugal in the Amazon Region, 1614-1693* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), pp. 22-4.

<sup>191</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503; Smith, p. 135.

Hilton described how the Indians had a customary drinking session that lasted for ‘3 or 4 dayes’ where they plotted to kill all the English settlers. Warner however, was warned by ‘an old Indian women that did often frequent amongst the English’ and had been treated kindly. Being a ‘wise man and a good Souldier’ he launched a preemptive nocturnal attack on the Indians while they were drunk and asleep, ‘& did kill and slay a great many of them’ including King Tegreeman. The surviving Indians managed to get into their canoes and flee to ‘other Islands amongst their neighbouring Indians & friends’. Shortly after this altercation D’Esnambuc arrived in his ship damaged by the Spanish and Warner offers joint settlement, ostensibly because of the threat of revenge attacks by the Indians who escaped, with Warner recognising he was ‘weake in men’. The English and French don’t have to wait long for a response; with ‘great power of men’ the Indians attacked the French at Basseterre, killing many including an unfortunate friar of whom they ‘cutt of his members, & thrust them into his mouth’ and then threw him down a well. A brave English lad who happened to be at the French fort then made a run for help, and the English came to the rescue ‘& soe beate the Indians of the Island the Second time’.<sup>192</sup>

It was noted in a previous chapter that Hilton’s evidence tends to play down the role of the French in an effort to help legitimise the English claim to the island. This is certainly in evidence here as when the French are attacked due to the Indian reprisal, Hilton tells of an audacious young Englishman that, pistols in hand, makes it from the French position to the English, who subsequently save the day. This may well be a reason for Hilton’s exclusion of the French from

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<sup>192</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fols 503-503b; Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 5.

the first altercation, contrary to Smith's and Du Tertre's accounts. Hilton is perhaps seeking to further remove them from the island's history of first settlement and further English claims to the island at their expense. It must be remembered Hilton may not have been on the island at the time of these events. This is not a barrier to the truth, but perhaps if he did not witness the events himself, Hilton was able to selectively favour the accounts of others that best suited his own personal motivations and the story of settlement he wished to portray.

Smith's account places the first friction between the English settlers and the St Christopher natives right from the former's arrival. The Frenchmen already on the island 'sought to oppose Captain Warner, and to set the Indians upon us'. This initial tension passes with all parties becoming 'friends' and Smith agrees with Hilton that the first thing the English attend to is building 'a fort, and a house'. However, their account differs significantly in terms of the first altercation. Smith mentions no conflict involving the English and the Indians prior to the French arrival. In fact it is D'Esnambuc who arrives with a warning that 'the Indians had slain some Frenchmen in other Caribbee Isles' and that there were six large canoes heading their way. These duly arrived containing some 'four or five hundred strange Indians', the English and French join together and 'put them to flight' on 5 November 1625. The Indians then performed a couple of small raids, one 'Upon New Years even' which kills three Englishmen, another some time after 4th September 1626 kills eight Frenchmen in the harbour. On 25 November 1627 the Indians mount a larger attack against the French 'for some injury about their women' where 26 Frenchmen, five Englishmen and three Indians were killed. There is no mention as to how this attack is repulsed, only that by 1629 all the Indians had been 'forced out of the isle, for they had

done much mischief amongst the French, in cutting their throats, burning their houses, and spoiling their tobacco'.<sup>193</sup> For Smith then there is no significant altercation prior to the French arrival nor the decisive English response suggested by Hilton. The attacks, when they come, are repulsed jointly by the English and French.

Du Tertre reinforces Smith's account that the Indians were defeated jointly by the English and French, and adds some important detail. He agrees with Hilton that the Indians held a 'vin' or drinking celebration, but adds that at this gathering 'distrust' was sown amongst the Indians by the Devil 'through one of their Boyez' or priests. They argue that the foreigners had only come to the island to 'massacre them cruelly, as they had exterminated their ancestors through iron and blood, both on the continent but also in the islands'.<sup>194</sup> The Indians then plan to attack on the full moon, and like Hilton, Du Tertre then states the English were warned of the attack by an Indian, a 'Savage women called Barbe'.<sup>195</sup> This goes some way to corroborate Hilton's account of the English being warned by an old Indian woman.

Du Tertre then states the English and the French:

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<sup>193</sup> Smith, pp. 135-7, 139.

<sup>194</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, p. 5.

<sup>195</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 6; Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, p. 5.

each took to their own region & on the same night killed them all asleep in their beds, without sparing a single one apart from some of the most beautiful women to satisfy their brutal passions and become slaves. There were 100 to 120 killed.<sup>196</sup>

This again seems to confirm Hilton's version of events; a preemptive attack followed by a large scale Indian reprisal against the settlers, albeit with the former not including the French according to Hilton.

As noted in the introduction, that Rowland Grasscock, one of the original settlers, was a contributor to Smith's account gives the narrative particular credence. Yet it is significant that Smith does not mention a preemptive strike at all; the larger attack by the Indians is the first conflict. It is the proximity to events of Smith's account's, being published in 1630, and the fact it is part of a work aimed at promoting English colonial activity, that perhaps explains this omission. Nowhere in this account is there mention of any Indian being killed by the English or French. In the first Indian attack the Indians are put 'to flight', and in the subsequent three attacks there is no mention of how the Indians are repulsed, only that three Englishmen were 'slew', eight Frenchmen 'slain in the harbour', or that the Indians 'slew six and twenty Frenchmen, five English, and three Indians'.<sup>197</sup> One only has to contrast this with Hilton's acknowledgement of the killing of a 'great many' Indians, corroborated by Du Tertre, in the preemptive strike to realise the significance of this omission.<sup>198</sup> Writing so close to these events whilst seeking to promote colonial activity made it more expedient to implicitly justify the taking

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<sup>196</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 7.

<sup>197</sup> Smith, pp. 136-7.

<sup>198</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503; Smith, pp. 136-7.

of Indian land as a by product of self-defence. Why else emphasise the English and French fatalities, something that would clearly make prospective investors and settlers think twice, whilst remaining silent regarding the Indian's side of this macabre equation?

Du Tertre states that prior to the preemptive attack carried out by the French and English, the Indians 'went to Savages from neighbouring islands for help' as the task was 'both difficult and preilous'. These neighbouring savages 'approved their decision and promised powerful assistance, agreeing to meet in St Christophers on the next Full Moon.' The English and French then prepared to receive a force of the neighbouring Indians after killing 100 to 120 of the St Christopher natives, by posting guards near the sea and on the larger roads. Between 3,000 - 4,000 Indians duly arrived. The French and English attacked, suffered some casualties, and then chased the Indians off in their canoes. At sea the Indians used bows and arrows to kill around 100 English and French men. However the number of Indian fatalities was far more significant, and were piled up 'a pike square in every direction' on the shore in a 'glorious victory' for the English and French.<sup>199</sup>

The veracity of Du Tertre's information on the scale of Indian fatalities is enhanced by his source, 'Sieur Pichon', surgeon to D'Esambuc, a direct witness to the conflict.<sup>200</sup> This further emphasises the omission of Indian fatalities by Smith who presents a picture of the English and French as victims of violence rather than perpetrators responsible for many hundreds of Indian

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<sup>199</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>200</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, p. 6.

deaths. Du Tertre paints a gruesome picture of slaughter by the English and French from which point the damage to relations between the Europeans and the Indians would have been irrevocable.

How then to reconcile these conflicting reports from the ‘chaos zone’? The balance of evidence shows that the English and French were present on the island at the time the first pre-emptive assaults on the natives were carried out. These attacks were in response to a warning received by the settlers from an Indian woman that the natives were planning a similar action of their own. This planned Indian offensive involved the cooperation of native groups from other neighbouring islands with whom the natives of St Christopher were clearly allied. That Warner invited D’Esnambuc and his men to settle with them prior to any action against the Indians suggests not only that he realised the vulnerability of his position, but also that trouble with the natives was already brewing by this point. However, it cannot be discounted that Warner only had a handful of men, and when confronted by D’Esnambuc and his well armed crew and ship, he realistically had little option but to offer aid. The strengthening of European numbers against a potential Indian attack by this joint settlement was perhaps then only a by-product of D’Esnambuc’s need for sanctuary.

The evidence demonstrates that the main instances of conflict were ended decisively by the settlers on both occasions, once through a surprise attack, then in a defence of their settlement from an assault by sea. In each case the number of Indian fatalities was high, and when combined would have been at least several hundred. After these incidents the Indians continued

to pester the settlers with smaller ambush style attacks, resulting in a number of settler fatalities, but the natives' position was significantly weakened from this point.

It is likely that John Fealty, 'the first preacher upon St Christopher' drew on memories of these events as inspiration for his 1629 sermon to his 'deserving Commander, Sir Thomas Warner' prior to their departure for the Caribbean. Fealty compared the English to the Israelites under Johsua, travelling to Canaan to banish the Canaanites for their sins. He imagined a 'Companie of Indian-Archers ranke themselves against us, yea and promise to themselves our utter confusion', yet the Englishmen's faith in god would ensure they would 'bee not afriad, neither be dismaid'.

For their enemies however:

time itselpe may (as it were) stand still the gasping groanes of dying men have mystied the Ayre, and their foamy blood disfigured the Earth, the Sunne shall seeme unjust to the conquered wretches, when each minute of unexpected Misery shall appeare more tedious then an Age of common Sorrowes.<sup>201</sup>

Given the killing of Tegreman and his men in their sleep and the piles of native dead described by Du Tertre, Fealty's sermon sums up the truth of the English settlement of St Christopher by 1629. The transition from trade and plunder to settlement agriculture was not simply the adoption of one politico-economic model for another. On St Christopher, as in Virginia, the reality was that before the first small plantations could be expanded into 'a tool of European political economy' that helped construct the mercantile state, the need to conquer the native

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<sup>201</sup> *A sermon preached to the nobely-deseruing gentleman, Sir Thomas Warner And the rest of his companie: bound to the West-Indies. For their farevvell: At St. Buttolphs, Aldersgate, London. Septemb. 6. 1629. By Iohn Fealty, Preacher of the Word of God*, (London: Bourne, 1629) pp.1-2, 32-3.



people was imperative.<sup>202</sup> This meant the death of the majority of the native male population on the island, and as the next chapter will show, the subjugation of the native women as slaves and victims of sexual violence.

What then prompted the natives of St Christopher to seek conflict with the settlers when the outcome of this confrontation was to prove so detrimental to their existence on the island? Why did the English settlers move so quickly to conflict whilst in the relatively comfortable position of trading with the Indians for fresh food? To answer these questions it is necessary to delve deeper into the ‘chaos zone’. The next chapter will consider how the sources can elucidate the Indian’s motives whilst also introducing ethnographic information to test the veracity of the European claims. Further explanations from the broader context of the contact zone will then be presented to offer plausible alternative sources of conflict; the martial approach of the English settlers, the perceived treachery of the Indians, and the direct lessons learnt from the 1622 Jamestown massacre.

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<sup>202</sup> Jordan Goodman, ‘Webs of Drug Dependence; Towards a Political History of Tobacco’, in *Ashes to Ashes, the History of Smoking and Health*, ed. by Stephen Lock, Lois Reynolds, and E. M. Tansey (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 4-40 (p. 5).

## Chapter 5 - Understanding conflict on St Christopher

All four of the primary sources in some way lay the blame for conflict at the door of the Indians. Even Du Tertre, who is perhaps the most likely to criticise the behaviour of Europeans in the New World, independently confirms Hilton's contention that the Indians were planning an attack and the English and French had no option but to carry out an attack first in self defence. Du Tertre's first account of the incident was published in 1654, while Hilton did not write his 'relation' until 1675, yet both agree on this preemptive action, although Hilton neglects to mention any French involvement. This apparent contradiction is not necessarily mutually exclusive to the truth as Du Tertre states the English and French 'each took to their own region & on the same night killed them all asleep in their beds'. Hilton is perhaps just reporting what he knew; that the English had indeed carried out an attack at this time. Smith, Du Tertre and Hilton all agree that Indians attacked in force, although there is a general discrepancy regarding the numbers; Smith states 400 - 500, Du Tertre, 3,000 - 4,000, and Hilton simply that there were 'great power of men'.

Why would the Indians wish to attack the English and French after the initial relationship seems to have been good? What had changed? Hilton perhaps provides the first clue when he states that relations deteriorated after the English built 'a fort of pallesadoes with flankers, & loopholes for their defence'.<sup>203</sup> This suggests that the building of a fort was not something that King

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<sup>203</sup> Egerton MS 2395 fol. 503

Tegreman believed to be in the spirit of whatever ‘licence’ he had granted to the English. Perhaps the Indians were unnerved by the apparent permanency of the structure, whereas they believed the license was for another far more transitory venture, similar to the Frenchmen Warner found on the island in 1624. It is possible a more permanent settlement was envisaged but that the fort and its defensive structures gave the English more of an advantage militarily than the Indians had allowed for. This is another example of what Barber refers to as the ingenuity of the settlers, using Amerindian building materials to create a fortified house, similar to those of the Welsh marches and Scottish borders of England, and Ireland.<sup>204</sup> After all, the initial group of 16 or so settlers could presumably have been kept to the terms of their license by over 100 Indians and their allies from other islands. But with the construction of a simple fort the English presence became more threatening and intractable. This perceived threat is further confirmed by evidence from Virginia where, in 1607, the English were treated well by the Indians ‘until they began to... fortifye, Then they fell to skirmishing and killed 3 of our people’.<sup>205</sup>

D’Esnambuc’s arrival must also be considered a development which could have moved the Indians to violence. Although eight or ten of his men had died in the encounter with the Spanish, this still left 25 - 27, who were ‘well disciplined and well armed’ with four canon and several ‘pierriers’, a small breech loading canon. Du Tertre, Smith and Hilton all agree that the French were present prior to the first large Indian attack, and this is telling. Hilton himself states Warner

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<sup>204</sup> D L Hobson, *The Domestic Architecture of the Earliest British Colonies in the American Tropics: A Study of the Houses of the Caribbean ‘Leeward’ Islands of St Christopher, Nevis, Antigua and Montserrat. 1624-1726*, (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2007) pp. 133-4.

<sup>205</sup> Barbour, p. 110.

realised he was 'weake in men', and the addition of Desnambuc's men and their weapons could certainly have tipped the balance of power on the island to the advantage of the Europeans.

Furthermore, D'Esnambuc's men represented the third group of Europeans to settle on the island in the space of a couple of years, so there was a very real possibility that more of their countrymen would follow. Given these circumstances on an island with limited resources and a small indigenous population who could not match the weaponry of the visitors, it is likely that the Indians felt forced into military action before their position was further weakened.

The description of the Indians planning an attack by Hilton and Du Tertre is given further credence as both mention the decision was made at a 'vin' or a 'drinking' that lasted '3 or 4 dayes'.<sup>206</sup> This evidence gets to the heart of the Indian belief system and how they viewed the Europeans, who were now clearly becoming a troubling presence on the island. De Rochefort relates conversations of Caribs blaming the coming of Europeans and the associated hardships of the Carib people on the fact that Maboya, the Carib evil spirit, had reduced them under the power of Europeans. In this belief system of good gods and Maboya the evil spirit, it seems likely that the natives of St Christopher would have understood an increasingly negative European presence on their island as being evidence of Maboya's displeasure. This coupled with the fact that shortly after the English had built their fort, on 19 September 1624 a hurricane struck that destroyed the English tobacco crop, and presumably also affected the natives' housing and provisions. Hurricanes in particular are mentioned by De Rochefort as being seen as a sign of Maboya's

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<sup>206</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 6; Egerton MS 2395 fol. 503

wrath, and the fact this hurricane occurs six weeks or so before the Indian attack, suggests it would have added to the Indians' concern regarding the impact of the European visitors.<sup>207</sup>

The method by which the Carib would seek to rid themselves of the presence of Maboya also gives further assurance to Du Tertre's account, as he mentions the 'Boyez' or priests as instrumental in the decision to attack the English and French. According to Du Tertre, at the 'vin' the devil, working through the Boyez convinced the natives 'that these foreign nations had only come...in order to slaughter them...as they had exterminated their ancestors...on the continent but also in the Islands'.<sup>208</sup> The Boyez would have been central to any Carib efforts to drive away the presence of Maboya. This would have been achieved at a ceremonial gathering where the Boyez would invoke their good spirits to drive away the evil presence. However, the Boyez were also known at such gatherings 'to demand revenge upon some body who hath done them any mischief, and to bring punishment upon him'.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, vins, although instigated in a number of different circumstances, were certainly associated with holding council for war.<sup>210</sup> This helps substantiate Hilton's mention of 'their drinking' at which war was advocated, and Du Tertre's mention of the 'vin' at which the Boyez fanned the flames of the Indians' distrust.

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<sup>207</sup> De Rochefort, p. 249; Smith, p.135.

<sup>208</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles* p. 5.

<sup>209</sup> De Rochefort, p. 279.

<sup>210</sup> De Rochefort, pp. 98-99.

There is a further curious detail that comes out of this incident hinting at the complexity of cross-cultural interaction at this very early stage of English settlement. Both Hilton and Du Tertre mention that warning of the pending Indian strike comes from an Indian woman. Hilton describes ‘an old Indian woman that did often frequent amongst the English, who it seems they had used courteously, soe that She had taken great affection to them’.<sup>211</sup> Du Tertre mentions that the Indian woman in question was called ‘Barbe’ but does not mention her age.<sup>212</sup> According to Pere Labat the Carib word ‘Bibi’ means ‘Grandmother or rather mother of everyone’, where the male equivalent is ‘Baba...father of everyone’ and this is confirmed by Breton’s Carib dictionary.<sup>213</sup> It is possible that ‘Barbe’ is actually a French approximation that combines these two words.

What is so intriguing here is that both De Rochefort and Labat state that an old woman would often play an important part in the Carib ‘vins’ in arriving at a decision to go to war. She would enter the vin ‘with a sad countenance and deportment’ and be given an audience, as the aged were revered in Carib society. The woman would then list the injuries the Indians had received at the hands of their enemies, and argue for vengeance, in the spirit of their forefathers. The ‘Captain’ would then make a speech of similar sentiment and the audiences applause would signify agreement to form a war party.<sup>214</sup> The significance of this evidence lies in the possibility

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<sup>211</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>212</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles*, p. 5.

<sup>213</sup> Eaden, *The Memoirs of Pere Labat*, p. 104; Breton, *dictionnaire caraibe-francais*, p. 42.

<sup>214</sup> De Rochefort, pp. 318-9; Eaden, *The Memoirs of Pere Labat*, p. 100.

that the old woman Hilton mentions warning the English of the impending Indian attack may have been fulfilling the same role she would have at a Carib *vin*. According to both Hilton and Du Tertre, her intervention was the crucial point from where the English plans for a preemptive strike began. Is this an example of a respected elder Indian woman using her traditional status in a new way to achieve her own political goals? Without more evidence it is of course difficult to prove this definitively, but one must consider that, just as in a *vin*, after the Indian woman's intervention, a Captain made the decision to go to war; however this Captain was not Tegreman, but Captain Thomas Warner, and with a devastating effect.

### **Alternative explanations of conflict**

The evidence above suggests that the building of a fort by the English and the arrival of the French under D'Esnambuc were significant factors in convincing the Indians of the settler's malevolent intentions. Then the Indians through a '*vin*' and the representations of their Boyez decided on war with the settlers. However, we must also consider other motivations that are not explicitly stated in the sources. Any analysis of the previous interactions between the natives of the New World and northern European settlers illustrates a number of key areas which always seem to present the base ingredients for conflict in the '*contact zone*'.

These interactions, of course, had their beginnings in the Caribbean. Frenchmen Rene Laudonniere's 1564 account of contact with the Caribs of Dominica provides an early example. The Indians ask that the French do not '*come neere their lodgings nor their gardens*' and

peaceable trading ensues.<sup>215</sup> Either greed or curiosity then gets the better of Laudonniere's men, who take fruit from the gardens and trespass into the village; there is then a skirmish and the French are forced to leave the island. Edmund Barker's trade with the Indians of Mona in 1594 continues this theme. Stranded on Mona, Barker's men steal pumpkins from the Indians' gardens. The Indians had previously traded peacefully with them but after this theft, withdrew into the mountains, avoiding further contact with the English.<sup>216</sup>

Perhaps the most infamous cautionary tale is from the crew of the *Olive Branch* stranded on St Lucia in 1605. There are again minor transgressions by the English, the Indians stop trading for food, and the English walk through the Carib gardens taking 'as much greene tobacco, Potatoes, and Cassada, as we could carrie'. From this point the transition to violence is swift and devastating, with only eleven settlers making it off the island alive from the original contingent of sixty-seven.<sup>217</sup> It is easy to see how similar circumstances would have arisen on St Christopher when the Indians ceased supplying food to the settlers after the English construction of the fort.

Du Tertre's evidence regarding the taking of the most beautiful women as slaves and for the settlers' sexual gratification provides another potential cause of conflict. The settlers' attitudes towards the native women demonstrated during the preemptive conflict, would presumably have been just as lascivious from the outset. Whilst the conflict obviously provided an opportunity for

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<sup>215</sup> Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, Vol IX, p. 4.

<sup>216</sup> Andrews, *English Privateering Voyages*, pp. 287, 289-290.

<sup>217</sup> *An Houre Glasse of Indian Newes*, C, C2.



the settlers to satisfy their needs in a decisive way, that is not to say there wouldn't have been more minor transgressions prior to this event. Of their interactions with the Caribs in the weeks of civil trading, Nichol of the *Olive Branch* crew states 'their women came verie seldom unto us, for they are verie jealous over them'.<sup>218</sup> This is confirmed by Labat who says the Carib 'are so jealous of their women that they kill them on the slightest suspicion'.<sup>219</sup> Smith's contention that the Indian attack on the French in November 1627 was due to 'some injury about their women' confirms the Caribs' determination to protect their women against this new threat.<sup>220</sup> The exclusively male composition of the settlers, and the fact no English women seem to have arrived on St Christopher until approximately September 1627 make this an extremely likely source of friction that would have added to Indian frustrations with the new settlers, and enabled them to be moved to conflict. This theory is further enhanced by the fact Thomas Warner himself would allegedly father at least one child, perhaps more, with an Indian woman, beginning in the late 1620's.<sup>221</sup>

The existence of these female native slaves raises the broader issue of Indian slavery. Neither Smith nor Hilton mention slavery in any form, however, in addition to Du Tertre's account there is further evidence for the presence of slaves on St Christopher from the early days of the settlement. The contract between D'Esnambuc, Roissey and the Compagnie de Saint-Christophe

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<sup>218</sup> *An Houre Glasse of Indian Newes*, C.

<sup>219</sup> Eaden, *The Memoirs of Pere Labat*, p. 79.

<sup>220</sup> Smith, p. 137.

<sup>221</sup> Eaden, *The Memoirs of Pere Labat*, p. 92; CSP Colonial, 1675-1676 and Addenda 1574-1674, pp. 170-180.

entitled them to half the profits of the labour of company ‘negroes, savages, or slaves’ for the first year.<sup>222</sup> Furthermore, the agreement signed between Warner and D’Esnambuc in 1627 states that ‘The Sayd Governors shall detayne any men or slaves in their plantations that shall not belong to them’.<sup>223</sup> This evidence shows that there were both Indian and African slaves present shortly after the conflict between the settlers and natives of St Christopher had reached its climax. Warner’s biographer uses this evidence to suggest Warner was acting in self-defence with his preemptive attack; why would he wish to kill so many Indians when he was clearly in need of labour? However, Warner was perhaps acting as the circumstances dictated. With the small number of men at his command, capturing and controlling a group of over 100 male Indian slaves would have been difficult at best.

Female slaves, however, were another matter. Labat comments that in Carib society women were subservient to their men in the extreme. They ‘are born servants and remain servants all their lives’, and would be far easier to incorporate into plantation life.<sup>224</sup> Ligon shows that in Barbados female Indian slaves were used in a domestic capacity to make cassava bread, cook, and minister to the settler’s tropical maladies, essentially similar tasks as they performed in Carib culture.<sup>225</sup> These interactions in the private sphere inevitably led to some slave women’s sexual contact with the settlers. One such slave would become Thomas Warner’s mistress and bear him a son, who became relatively well known in the 1670’s as Thomas ‘Indian’ Warner, Governor of Dominica.

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<sup>222</sup> Boucher, p. 154.

<sup>223</sup> Egerton MS 2395, f. 9

<sup>224</sup> Eaden, *The Memoirs of Pere Labat*, p. 105.

<sup>225</sup> Ligon, pp. 22, 29-30, 54, 65.

Coppier further affirms the existence of this kind of relationship stating that ‘Seignur du Roysse’, D’Esnambuc’s partner on St Christopher, ‘had a very pretty Savage baptized under the name of Francoise whom he used [with whom he lived and slept]’ while later Governor on St Vincent.<sup>226</sup> This evidence, combined with Du Tertre’s account, shows the settlers attitude towards native women; they could be taken, perhaps temporarily for sexual gratification, or permanently as slaves, where they would fulfil the role of home makers and concubines.

Male Indian slaves were also on the island but potentially from a different source. There is much incidental material regarding the first decade of settlement from the 1670’s trial of Thomas Warner’s son Philip, for the murder of his half brother, Indian Warner. From the various testimonies given it is again clear that by 1628 - 1629 there were a number of Indian slaves present on St Christopher. Robert Chopin stated Warner had twenty-four at this time residing in an ‘Indian house’, with other sources specifying at least one male adult and a boy, who lived ‘fishing and fowling’ with Sir Thomas Warner.<sup>227</sup> This tallies with Ligon’s description of using male Indian slaves for fishing.<sup>228</sup>

It is possible that these Indians were survivors of the preemptive attack by the English, or taken prisoner during the Indian attack from the sea. However, Labat shows Warner’s Indian mistress was from Dominica, having met her there many years later. That Indian Warner maintained links with the natives of that island, hence his award of the Governorship by Lord Willoughby, also

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<sup>226</sup> Hunt, p. 262.

<sup>227</sup> CSP Colonial, 1675-1676 and Addenda 1574-1674, pp. 316-327, 365-388

<sup>228</sup> Ligon, p. 54.

points to Dominica as the likely location of some of St Christopher's Indian slaves. De Rochefort states that the English had 'cunningly trapan'd and carried away' Caribs by enticing them on board their ships with alcohol and other gifts, then 'weighed anchor and carried men, women, and children to their plantations'.<sup>229</sup> Barbados Governor Sir Jonathan Atkins confirmed to the Lord of Trade and Plantations that the Carib had 'always been very pernicious to the English' for just this reason.<sup>230</sup>

This evidence shows that not only did Warner plan to take the Indian's cleared land once his plantation was strong enough to do so, but that he also had designs on using the Indians of St Christopher and from other islands as slaves in a domestic capacity. This makes it impossible to believe that Warner entered into the original agreement with Tegreman with a genuine will for mutual benefit. Warner seems to have played each situation in a carefully calculated way to enable the survival and growth of his colony at the expense of the Indian's lives and liberty.

It made financial sense for Warner to use Indian slave labour; they were taken against their will at no cost to the English. This was an extension of the Virginia Company's advice to the colony after the 1622 massacre (examined below) that of Indians captured in war the 'younger people of both sexes' should be spared as they might 'by labor and service become profitable'.<sup>231</sup> African slaves on the other hand were expensive and present in the English Atlantic world in very small

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<sup>229</sup> De Rochefort, pp. 266, 323.

<sup>230</sup> CSP Colonial, 1675-1676 and Addenda 1574-1674, pp. 345-355.

<sup>231</sup> Susan Myra Kingsbury (ed), *The Records of the Virginia Company*, Vol.III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), p. 672.

numbers at this time. The majority of Africans were not obtained directly from their homelands, rather taken as prizes from Portuguese and Spanish vessels or bought directly from the Dutch. This was the case for the '20. and odd negroes' present in Virginia in 1620, the 8-10 on Barbados in 1627, and also the forty put to work on Tortuga by Anthony Hilton in 1633.<sup>232</sup> It is curious then that Maurice Thompson was apparently 'sent out to St. Christophers with Captain Coomes to plante [with] about sixty slaves' sometime in 1626.<sup>233</sup> Thompson would develop east African interests and become involved in the African slave trade, but the date seems far too early for this development. Bridenbaugh is certain Thompson 'crossed the ocean' with the African's, yet the manuscript source is brief and non-specific, and the context of the time makes it more likely they were obtained in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, this demonstrates that almost from the beginning of the colony, Indian and African slaves, along with white indentures, worked and lived together on the tobacco plantations. Both the male and female Indians proficiency in the provision of food meant they were used in a domestic capacity. This demonstrates a continuation of the English settlers benefiting from the local knowledge of the native inhabitants, a process that began with amicable relations and continued into Indian bondage.

Morgan argues that indentured colonial labour was a 'move toward a system of labour that treated men as things', something that brought the introduction of African slavery closer. Whilst indenture was not the same as 'selling a man for life and their unborn children with them', taking

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<sup>232</sup> Kingsbury, p. 243; Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line, The English in the Caribbean 1624-1690* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), p. 32; A. P. Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the Puritans, The Last Phase of the Elizabethan Struggle with Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914), p. 110.

<sup>233</sup> Harlow, p. 26.

Indian men, women and children by force to work as domestic slaves most certainly was.<sup>234</sup> The move toward the direct importation of African slaves to work on English plantations that occurred from the late 1630's must also be seen in the context of the Indian slavery that preceded it. The inclusion of the Indian's narrative is therefore vital not only in providing an accurate portrayal of the events surrounding the settlement of St Christopher, but also in establishing meaningful context to the period that followed.

### **Military men and treachery**

Conflict seems to have been the inevitable outcome due to the behaviour of European men far from home, the changing terms of the initial license between Warner and Tegreman, and an Indian population determined to fight for their land. However, it was not just the difficulties relating to controlling men far removed from the social constraints of their home country that led to this inevitability. The military background of the English colonial leadership also played a significant role in Indian relations and constrained English actions within military parameters. As Captain John Smith stated 'the Warres in Europe, Asia and Africa taught me how to subdue the wild Salvages in Virginia and New England in America'.<sup>235</sup>

Thomas Warner had been a Captain in James I's bodyguard and a Lieutenant of the Tower and, as Sir Henry Colt observed of the men under Warner's Governorship on St Christopher, 'they

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<sup>234</sup> E. S. Morgan, p. 198.

<sup>235</sup> Capt. John Smith: *Works. 1608-1631*, ed by Edward Arber (Birmingham, 1884), p.925

liue like unto soldyers, ther court of gard appoynted them, their centinells orderly placed'.<sup>236</sup> This continued the trend from the very beginning of English colonial ambition. Men like Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Richard Grenville and Sir Ralph Lane were already known for their colonial endeavours in Ireland, putting down the Desmond rebellion, confiscating native lands and planting Englishmen at Munster.<sup>237</sup> The Atlantic could not hold their colonial ambition, and Ralph Lane's deeds in Roanoke, England's first attempted settlement in the New World, provide an important window on this perspective.

Lane was a steadfastly military man and responded to circumstances squarely from this mindset. The withdrawal of Indian chief Pemisapan from Roanoke to his seat at Daseunkeuc, a longstanding native tradition, was interpreted by Lane as an act of war due to the settlers utter dependence on the Indians for food. Lane assumed the gathering of a large number of natives in memorial of another chief was a cover for massing enough forces to attack the English, even going so far as to imagine what his own death would be like at their hands. On 1st June 1586 Lane led a preemptive surprise attack on Pemisapan's tribe, murdering the chief and killing a great many other Indians.<sup>238</sup> This course of events is markedly similar to Warner's action on St Christopher, from the assumption of imminent Indian hostility evidenced by the invitation to D'Enambuc of joint settlement, to the preemptive attack and murder of Tegreman and his men.

Whereas Lane was eventually forced to abandon the colony due to fear of reprisals, Warner's

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<sup>236</sup> Aucher Warner, *Sir Thomas Warner Pioneer of the West Indies* (London: The West India Committee, 1933), p. 21; 'The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt' printed in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 71.

<sup>237</sup> Eric Klingelhofer and James Lyttleton, 'Molana Abbey and its New World Master', *Archaeology Ireland*, 24: 4 (Winter 2010), p. 22.

<sup>238</sup> Donegan, pp. 303-6.

island location meant he was able to neutralise the threat posed by the St Christopher natives in one swift action, and was confident he could defend the settlement from attacks by sea, as proved to be the case.

This martial approach to settlement is also intrinsically linked to the vulnerability felt by settlers in their new surroundings, not least due to the perceived inherent treachery of the natives. For Hilton and Smith, Warner had settled with the ‘license’ of Tegreman and it was the Indians who enacted hostilities. Du Tertre agrees, stating the ‘frenchmen, Englishmen abhorring so terrible a conspiracy’ were forced to take preemptive action. This belief in treachery is further shown by D’Esnambuc’s warning to the English that ‘the Indians had slain some Frenchmen in other of the Caribbee Isles’ and were now headed to St Christopher with the same intent.<sup>239</sup> The feeling that the natives were somehow plotting against them is of course reflected in Lane’s story above, and entered the English consciousness with the Roanoke settlement, but it remains a prominent feature throughout the early period of English settlement in Virginia.<sup>240</sup>

In the Caribbean a similar pattern of behaviour presented. After their antagonistic behaviour on St Lucia the *Olive Branch* crew begin to fear the Indians ‘villainie’ and ‘treacherie’. This seems an implicit admission by the English that they had made their situation much worse by their own actions. Trade and co-existence had been peaceful until the English misdemeanours, yet as soon as relations had deteriorated they found their vulnerability was so extreme that their lives were

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<sup>239</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des isles de S. Christophe*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>240</sup> Kupperman, ‘English Perceptions of Treachery’, pp. 265, 270-1.



now almost entirely in the hands of the Indians. The only account that exists for the failed 1609 English settlement of Grenada states it was destroyed by a conspiracy between the Spanish of Trinidad and the Carib natives of the island. The former delayed the English ships in trade whilst the latter attacked and killed the majority of the 208 Englishmen.<sup>241</sup> Connivance between natives and the Spaniards is also suggested as a further example of the treachery of the Indians of St Christopher. De Rochefort argues that 'secret intelligence' between the Spanish and Indians was the main motivation for Warner and D'Esnambuc's preemptive attack. It is easy to see how this sort of baseless rumour could be started given previous evidence regarding the Spanish leaving sick sailors on St Christopher's for their recovery, with the agreement of the 'Caribbians'.<sup>242</sup>

Perhaps the most infamous example of Indian treachery in the minds of the colonial English was the 1622 massacre at Jamestown where more than 350 settlers were killed by braves of the Powhatan Confederacy.<sup>243</sup> This seminal event precedes Warner's settlement on St Christopher by less than two years; the massacre occurred 22 March 1622, Warner arrived on St Christopher in the January of 1624. The massacre was well reported in England and Warner and his settlers shared transportation with Virginia settlers, on their voyage to St Christopher, where direct information could be exchanged. Indeed, it is likely Warner headed back from the Amazon on a ship via Virginia in late 1622 or early 1623. He and his partners would have experienced the aftermath of the massacre firsthand. The conclusions to be drawn from the massacre left no

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<sup>241</sup> *An Houre Glasse of Indian Newes*, C, C3; Sloane MS 3662, fol. 52, printed in N. Darnell Davis, *Early English Colonies in Trinidad* (Georgetown: The Argosy Press, 1896), pp. 25-6.

<sup>242</sup> De Rochefort, pp.160, 324.

<sup>243</sup> Wayne E. Lee, 'Peace Chief's and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Jul., 2007), p. 706.

doubt about the ‘barbourous massacre...treacherously executed by the Natiue Infidels vpon the English’ and that this ‘perfidious treachery’ was committed by a ‘false-hearted people, that know not God or faith’.<sup>244</sup>

Waterhouse immediately establishes the theme of Indian treachery stating just two days prior to the massacre that chief Opachankano had confirmed a lasting peace between the two parties. However, at this very moment the Indians were plotting against the settlers; ‘such was the treacherous dissimulation of that people who then had contriued our destruction’. The Indians came unarmed into the English settlements killing men, women and children with whatever implements they could find ‘basely and barbarously’. Not content with killing so many English, ‘they fell againe vpon the dead...defacing, dragging, and mangling the...carcasses into many pieces, and carrying some parts away in derisions with base and brutish triumph’. Waterhouse is particularly aggrieved that the Indians did not even spare those settlers whom had been kind to the natives, again suggesting that their previous peaceful relations had been a diversionary tactic.<sup>245</sup>

The double standard here when describing the surprise Indian attack on the Jamestown settlers and the surprise attack by Warner and D’Esnambuc on the natives of St Christopher is clear. The Powhatan attack was treacherous and deceitful, whereas Warner’s actions were those of a ‘wise

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<sup>244</sup> Kingsbury, pp. 541-2.

<sup>245</sup> Kingsbury, pp. 550-1.

man and a good soldier'.<sup>246</sup> The Powhatan were a 'perfidious and inhumane people, contrary to all laws of God and men, of Nature and Nations', for coming unarmed and first sitting down to breakfast with the settlers before murdering them.<sup>247</sup> However, Warner's men can hardly be judged any more virtuous for taking 'advantage of their being druncke' and murdering the Indians who were 'all asleep in their beds'.<sup>248</sup> Both of these actions were preemptive and a reaction to a rational feeling of vulnerability. Yet the English are portrayed as the victims of deceitful behaviour whereas the Indians of St Christopher had brought their fate upon themselves. This latter point gives further irony to the portrayal of Indian treachery, in that the natives of St Christopher were simply planning to do what the English succeeded in doing first on St Christopher and the Powhatan's succeeded at in Virginia; to launch a preemptive attack while they still maintained some military parity with the enemy.

The concerns of the Powhatan, who were a powerful confederacy and in a much stronger position than the natives of St Christopher to resist the newcomers, suggests the latter sense of vulnerability would have been even more acute. The Virginia settlers acknowledged the Powhatan feared 'that in time we by growing continually vpon them, would dispossess them of this Country, as they had beene formerly of the West Indies by the Spaniard' and it was this fear

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<sup>246</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>247</sup> Kingsbury, p. 551.

<sup>248</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503; Du Tertre, *Histoire general des isles de S. Christophe*, p. 7.

that ‘produced this bloody act.’<sup>249</sup> It would seem the same fears were exhibited by the native people of St Christopher who, in planning an attack of their own, ultimately sealed their fate.

### **Lessons from 1622 - ‘the losse of this blood to make the body more healthful’**

What is perhaps most significant for the settlement of St Christopher regarding the 1622 massacre are the lessons that the English drew from the experience. The Indians, by rejecting the friendship of the English had refused Gods mercy and should now face his judgement. The English hands would no longer be tied by diplomacy, but could now use the ‘right of war, and law of nations’ to remove the Indians and ‘enjoy their cultiuated places, turning the laborious Mattocke into the victorious Sword...their cleared grounds...shall be inhabited by vs’.<sup>250</sup> Given the evidence presented in the previous chapter on Indian agriculture, there is a startling similarity here that suggests Warner’s motives on settling St Christopher were not just so that there was an Indian population to supply provisions. Rather that in the fulness of time, once the colony was of sufficient number to expand, they could move onto already cleared Indian land. In other words, Warner had his eye on the cleared Indian land from the very beginning of the settlement and the initial period of friendship with the Indians was only to procure supplies for the nascent colony. If this was the case then Warner is certainly guilty of the same treachery suggested by Waterhouse of the Powhatan in feigning friendship prior to the massacre of 1622. Furthermore, the fact the St Christopher natives had planned to attack the English prior to their own massacre

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<sup>249</sup> Kingsbury, p.556.

<sup>250</sup> Kingsbury, pp. 553, 556-7.

suggests they had also arrived at this conclusion. The planned Indian attack, far from being an act of treachery, was in fact the logical response to continued English encroachment that went well beyond the terms of Warner's license from Tegurman.

Given the proximity of these events in Virginia to Warners settlement these lessons would have weighed heavily on Warner and his men. As Waterhouse states, after this experience Englishmen would 'vpon this Anvile...beate out to our selues an armour of prooffe, which shall for euer after defend vs from barbarous Incursions'.<sup>251</sup> Perhaps, as all the evidence so far has shown, conflict was inevitable on St Christopher due to the behaviour of Englishmen overseas, the military style leadership, and the vulnerability felt by the colonial English. However, the 1622 massacre meant that Warner settled at a time of heightened anxiety regarding the threat faced from Native Americans. Brookes' 1622 poem perhaps best sums up the feeling of the settlers towards Native Americans at this point, describing them as:

Soules drown'd in flesh and blood;  
Rotted in Evil and oppos'd in Good;  
Errors of Nature, oh inhumane Birth;  
The very dregs, garbage, and spanne of Earth.<sup>252</sup>

The effect of the massacre on the English was twofold. Just as the Indian's long repressed enmity was unveiled, so was the colonist's implicit distrust and dislike of the Indians. Until the massacre there was a minority view expressed by those like John Rolfe and George Yeardley that Virginian society could include the Indians, albeit speaking English and having adopted English customs

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<sup>251</sup> Kingsbury, p. 559.

<sup>252</sup> Christopher Brooke, *A Poem on the late Massacre in Virginia With Particular Mention of Those Men of Note that Suffered in that Disaster* (London: 1622), pp. 22-3.

and religion. From 1622 this position became untenable, with even Samuel Purchas, a leading exponent of integration, now blaming the Indians and seeking their expulsion from the English settlement zone.

When Warner arrived on St Christopher in January 1624 the Virginia colonists had been engaged in all out war with the Indians for nearly two years, and the killing would continue until 1625, when they began to focus more on building the colonies defences. The conflict was brutally persecuted by the English. False peace was declared to allow the Indian's to plant corn; the Indians were then killed and their corn taken. At one peace gathering 200 Indians were poisoned by the English during a ceremonial toast. As Cave comments the 'policy towards the Indians of the James and York rivers remained one of unrelenting hostility'.<sup>253</sup>

'Happie is he whom other mens harmes doth make to be ware' was the advice of the Virginia colony to neighbouring Plymouth.<sup>254</sup> Given the evidence presented above regarding conflict and the taking of Indian land on St Christopher, it seems Warner also heeded this advice well, ruthlessly applying the lessons of Virginia. The continued and explicit link by English settlers of the Indian's treachery and their perceived savage nature in fact hides a more implicit admission; once amicable settlement was becoming a war between the native people of the New World and the visitors from the Old. War was the only possible conclusion when considering the evidence

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<sup>253</sup> Alfred A. Cave, *Lethal Encounters: Englishmen and Indians in Colonial Virginia* (Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2001), pp. 125-28.

<sup>254</sup> Alden T. Vaughan, ' "Expulsion of the Savages": English Policy and the Virginia Massacre of 1622', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 35:1 (Jan. 1978), pp.57-84 (p.82).

that the English knew the Indians felt their vital interests were being threatened. Treachery was to be expected as the logical response to a threatening new presence in a wartime scenario.<sup>255</sup>

This chapter has sought to expand on the reasons and motivations for conflict from both the settler and native perspectives. The evidence has demonstrated that any attempt to portray the conflict on St Christopher as part of a pioneering settlement narrative is to grossly over-simplify events, and fatally weaken any account of the beginnings of imperial history of which they are a part. Only by seeking to include the natives' viewpoint as fully as possible, despite the challenges this presents, can a meaningful history of this nascent colonial period be achieved. The inclusion of the indigenous perspective does not simply add balance to the story; it further informs analysis of the English settler's motivations and actions.

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<sup>255</sup> Kupperman, 'English Perceptions of Treachery', pp. 284-7.

## Epilogue

...and all the Indians forced out of the isle, for they had done much mischief amongst the French, in cutting their throats, burning their houses, and spoiling their tobacco.

Captain Smith concluded in 1629 that the native population of St Christopher had been entirely removed from the island.<sup>256</sup> Hilton's account describes the Indian's being 'Beate of the Island the Second time', after the Carib attack by sea.<sup>257</sup> There is, however, good evidence to show that the Indians survived on St Christopher after this overwhelming defeat. John Hilton's brother Anthony was the first to settle on the windward side of St Christopher some time in 1627. His time there was to be short lived as 'Indians...came upon them and did fire their Houses and slew divers of his men'.<sup>258</sup> In the same year Smith described how the Indians attacked the French at Basseterre.<sup>259</sup> Neither account suggests the attacks being from the sea, and furthermore, when the Spanish tried to expel the English from the Island in 1629, 'about 400 Englishmen fled to the mountains and were succoured by the Indians'.<sup>260</sup> Who were these Indians mentioned in the Calendar of State Papers, written after Smith's assertion that the Indians had been extricated from the island?

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<sup>256</sup> Smith, p. 139.

<sup>257</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 503

<sup>258</sup> Egerton MS 2395, fol. 504

<sup>259</sup> Smith, p. 137.

<sup>260</sup> CSP Colonial, 1574-1660, pp.102-04.



It is evident from Hilton's account that after the preemptive English attack some Indians survived and 'gott into theire cannoes'.<sup>261</sup> Hilton assumed these escapees went to neighbouring islands, but the evidence cited above suggests that some Indians stayed on St Christopher, retreating to the unpopulated windward side and perhaps living a more marginal existence foraging in the forest, where the English found them in 1629. This is supported by Colt who found that in 1631 'St Christopher hath many naked Indians..& ther bellyes be to great for their proportions'.<sup>262</sup> The fact these Indian's were naked suggests they were free, not slaves, and their swollen stomachs are an obvious sign of malnutrition. This further demonstrates the ability of the natives of St Christopher to adapt and survive albeit malnourished, in the most challenging of circumstances, and dispels the clean lines of the imperial settlement narrative.

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<sup>261</sup> Egerton MS 2395, f.503

<sup>262</sup> 'Voyage of Sir Henry Colt' published in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. by Harlow, p. 93.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that Warner chose St Christopher because it had a native population. They could feed the colony and provide enough cleared land to start planting immediately. For the Indians this gave them direct access to the iron goods which were transforming their local trade networks. Warner also planned to either enslave or at least drive the Indians off of their cleared land to expand the colony when it was strong enough to do so. The increasing numbers of Europeans and their weapons, along with their transgressions, started to outweigh the benefits of trade for the natives. The Indians planned decisive action while they still could, but were defeated partly by the agency of a native woman, whose motives are not clear. The English acted as ruthlessly as the Indians had hoped to, gaining a decisive advantage in the occupation of the island, and access to a good deal more cleared land.

Warner's calculations proved accurate. The food, knowledge and cleared land provided by the Indians allowed his men to focus solely on constructing the first English tobacco plantation in the West Indies. The first crop ensured financial and political support and more settlers to expand the plantation. By taking cleared native land the English ensured they could make the most of this new investment, finding quick returns while the price of tobacco was still high. By 1629, when the Spanish attacked, some 3,000 Englishmen lived on St Christopher and proved impossible to dislodge. From St Christopher the English surplus population would settle Nevis

(1628), Antigua and Montserrat (1632), and the French, St Martins (1648), St Bartholomew (1648) and St Croix (1650)<sup>263</sup>. By 1637 the English population of St Christopher was 12,000. By 1638 she would ship five hundred thousand pounds of tobacco to London.<sup>264</sup> This thesis has demonstrated that the contribution of the natives of St Christopher, overlooked in the historiography, played a significant role in this success.

The immediate consequences for the Indians of St Christopher were death, slavery, a marginal but free existence on the island, or escape to the larger Carib Islands further south. However, the Carib continued to exert and preserve their independence throughout the seventeenth century from their Windward strongholds. They pestered English settlements in the Leewards and became important players in Anglo-French rivalries in the Caribbean, receiving weapons and trade from both parties as a result.<sup>265</sup> Recognising the extent of the native contribution to the English settlement of St Christopher corrects the hollow pioneering narrative, recognising an important part of this story of agency, adaptation and survival.

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<sup>263</sup> Andrews, *Trade and Plunder*, p. 302; Davies, p.136; Bridenbaugh, p. 20.

<sup>264</sup> Goodman, *Tobacco in History*, p. 139.

<sup>265</sup> Beckles, *Kalinago Resistance*, pp. 89-90.

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